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SPRING 2004 ISSUE #105

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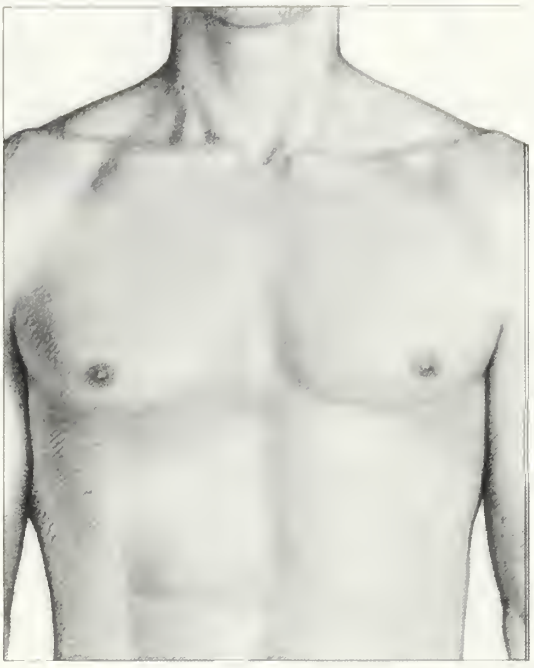

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Issue #105 Spring 2004

Transgender TAPESTRY

ISSUE #105 SPRING 2004

The Journal of the International Foundation for Gender Education

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The International Foundation for Gender Education (IFGE)

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Transgender Tapestry
is published by the I.F.G.E.
P.O. Box 540229, Waltham, MA 02454-0229
phone: 781.899.2212 fax: 781.899.5703
e-mail: info@ifge.org

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Guidelines For Contributors

Transgender Tapestry is a magazine for and about crossdressers, transgendered, transsexual, intersexed, and other gender-variant persons, and those who support them.

Our Readers

Write for a general audience. Our readers include closeted and out people: crossdressers, transsexuals, transgenderists, intersexed persons, gay men, lesbians, bisexuals, heterosexuals, therapists, physicians, ministers, spouses and significant others, family members, and friends. Our readers span all ages, races, nationalities, religions, spiritualities, beliefs and opinions, and educational backgrounds. Your piece may be targeted for one group, but it should speak to the larger readership.

We want writing that challenges categories, presumptions, and accepted thought.

How To Submit

The best way to send materials is via e-mail. We get it immediately and we don't have to retype it.

Send your submissions to: editor@ifge.org. Attach a file, using MIME encoding. These formats are acceptable for text files: Microsoft Word, WordPerfect, Rich Text Files (RTF), and Text. Please name your file so it makes sense to us, and for goodness sakes, be sure to include your name and contact information with text files. A file named "Tapestry" doesn't tell us much! Much better to use "John Smith Poem" or "Martha Michaelson Submission."

It's okay to send text in the body of an e-mail, but our Eudora Light mail reader doesn't recognize embedded codes.

Graphic images should be high-resolution TIFF or EPS format, saved at 300dpi and submitted to the editor (address below) on Zip disk or CD-R. Please include your return address if you would like your materials returned to you. If you prefer to send images in BMP, GIF, or JPG format—although they are easy to send via e-mail, please know the quality of your image will be severely compromised by the printing process.

Unless they're self-extracting, please don't send zipped files without clearing it with us beforehand. No e-mail? Send a PC-compatible or MAC floppy to Dallas Denny, P.O. Box 33724, Decatur, GA 30033-0724.

We hate typing in text, but we understand some people can't afford or don't like computers, so believe it or not, we accept articles on paper. Please include a brief biography with your submission.

What To Send Us

We want original material. We rarely accept simultaneous or previously published submissions. We're interested in ideas which have been previously under-explored. We accept submissions on gender issues of general interest, including: new (for some people) types of diversity; little-known information about transgender history; under-utilized resources and populations; personal struggles; social or medical issues; humor with an underlying message; and satire.

Things We Shouldn't Have To Say

DO send us stuff. Deadlines are firm. Contact us before submitting. Talk with us before writing, if possible. Let us know what you want to do and when you can deliver it. Send us a rough draft if you have one. Be reliable. Make your word stick. Be concise. Don't ramble, and don't try to tackle too much in one article.

Don't be heartbroken if we don't use your submission. A rejection often has more to do with the theme or the space available in the magazine than the quality of the writing.

Pronoun Trouble

Several years ago, I went with a friend to a rainy Pride celebration in Atlanta's Piedmont Park. Afterwards, muddy and damp, our hair frizzed, we decided to get something to eat. My friend pulled her SUV into the parking lot of a high-dollar Mexican restaurant, where we were greeted by a parking valet. He said to my friend, a transsexual woman, "Good afternoon, sir." A moment later, having taken a better look, he started over. "Good afternoon, ma'am."

Inside the restaurant, my friend sat steaming about the perceived insult. I said to her, more or less, "He just did what all human beings do—when he saw you, he made an immediate gender attribution. Then, when he looked more closely, he changed the pronoun. Maybe he thought his initial impression had been mistaken. Maybe he clocked you and was courteous enough to call you ma'am. In either case, how did he give offense?"

She wasn't able to tell me.

Having occasionally misused pronouns myself, sometimes with trans-people and sometimes with non-transgendered folk, I know that despite our best intentions, our tongues occasionally slip. So long as our hearts are pure, I don't believe we should be overly harsh with ourselves over infrequent and unintentional pronoun boo-boos. Part of the price we pay for being human is a less-than-perfect connection between our brain and our larynx.

Pronouns are powerful. Speaking from experience, I know they can feel like little barbed arrows when they misidentify me. However, I know that most pronoun misattributions are done innocently. We should get mad when pronouns are misused deliberately, but there's no reason to get angry when people happen to make an unfortunate guess. They are, after all, merely reacting to what they see. *TT*

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Note: For a contrasting viewpoint on this subject turn to page 24.

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One Year Later

A word from the Chair of the IFGE Board of Directors
Moonhawk River Stone

I crossed the bridge again tonight, picking my way among the icy leftovers of the intense early arrival of winter. Found my brick, too; midnight and the new year would wait while I considered it one more time, feeling so inconspicuously anonymous in the crowd of New Year's revelers. Just one of hundreds come to see the old year out and the new in with the midnight fireworks over the river, my transness, my queerness invisible in the revelry, and heavy clothing for the night's chill.

Things were tense and uneasy beneath the brightness and levity of the crowd. At four o'clock this very afternoon, a young man, 24 years old and as full of promise as they get, became a murdered bystander in an unfortunate accident when police pursuing a suspect opened fire. He died instantly, while the suspect got away, only to be apprehended later. Police were out everywhere, itchy and nervous, quiet and somber, sticking together, seemingly reluctant to work. Wondering, I bet, how the public might receive them this evening.

Murder and mayhem had touched our region at a startling rate in the past seven days, with seven people murdered and both a police officer and suspect in critical condition in intensive care at the hospital. I think we were numb with both the extreme violence and the senselessness of it all. That numbness lurked beneath the revelry.

On nights such as these, I like my anonymity. I'm just one more older guy, invisible in the throng of young couples and families out for a good time. But not even the fireworks could make this good time reach for the stars. Somehow, when my eyes met the sky, all I could see were the stars mingling with the fireworks, reminding me how short life is, how precious it is, and how quickly it can be extinguished.

When you read this, the war in Iraq, despite the President's declaration of victory, will be a year old, and the quagmire that has been created is still deepening daily. That moment Alyn Libman and I shared last March (see Tapestry #103 pg 7) will be a year old, too. He has moved on to Berkeley, thrusting himself into the challenges and joys of freshman year at college, safe from war, but not from the aftereffects of the war, not from the terror we as queer people feel here at home where fear of homeland security is often greater than any fear of terrorism we might have.

We're like that at this dawning of the New Year in the transgender community. Weary from battle, having lost a lot of very fine people to hate crimes and other tragedies.

I had come across the bridge to the fireworks from seeing "Lord of the Rings," and was reminded that in the end the good guys win, but meanwhile life is terrifyingly dangerous, challenging all to the core of their spirits, and a lot of good people die. Some, like Frodo, are so forever changed they can no longer live in the world, having experienced life at an altogether different intensity and spectrum. For others, everything is essentially changed, yet life goes on as if nothing had changed. The paradox.

We're like that at this dawning of the New Year in the transgender community. Weary from battle, having lost a lot of very fine people to hate crimes and other tragedies. We've come to realize that trouble may come even from those among us. It's like it was at the end of "The Two Towers;" we've survived the dark times (pre the *Lawrence v. Texas* victory) to see the dramatic rise of hope out of the helplessness of the dark, only to realize the real battle lies ahead and that it will be the ultimate test for all of us. And it won't be easy or pretty. Just gruelingly tough for a while. Then, as Ghandi has said, we'll win.

Then what? Well, there will always be others to help. But we must remember that like all challenges before us, not all is grim; victories are happening every day on many fronts, just as in "Lord Of The Rings."

We as transgendered people gained our civil rights in more places this year—

California; New Mexico; Key West; Peoria and Springfield, IL; Covington, KY; Ithaca, NY; and other places. We've come before the media with mixed results, but more often respectful than not. Our knowledge of ourselves is increasing, and we're publishing more and better information about ourselves (Mr. Bailey notwithstanding). Our voices and our perspective are more included in progressive politics—Governor Dean supports transgendered people, as do former Texas Governor Ann Richards and others.

I am reminded that even in the darkest nights, there is hope and enchantment. Watching the fireworks, my thoughts fell to an October night, returning home from a community presentation on the movie "No Dumb Questions." On the on ramp to the freeway, I came upon an injured bunny, sitting paralyzed with fright in the middle of the road. Hir injuries were not fatal, so I bent down and began talking softly to the bunny, and, leaning closer, offered the healing energy of Reiki. After several minutes, I helped the bunny hop to the road's shoulder and continued my Reiki. Then, the bunny looked up at me with those big deep bunny eyes, sighed, and very deliberately rubbed hir nose delicately the full length of first my left, then my right hand. Following that, I was able to place my hands directly on the bunny's body, which, if you know bunnies, is unheard-of contact. Meanwhile, I had waved several cars around me. The next car was that of an off-duty police officer,

who stopped, got out, identified himself to me, and offered to help, stating that just the previous week he had rescued a raccoon on this very ramp. He moved my car, directed traffic around me, graciously dealing with a car full of rowdy, nasty college boys. He was fascinated by what I was doing, and stood a respectful distance until the bunny was able to hop off on hir own. We shook hands, pleased with the result.

Thinking of that officer, the bunny, and the past week of violence, I knew things would be OK. It's a good year when you're kissed by a bunny and you can count among the police compassionate and caring officers.

Here at IFGE, we've come through a year of preparation and stabilization, getting ready to step out a little differently than we have in the past. No fireworks yet, but compassion and caring through education are in abundance here at IFGE. You'll be hearing more from us about these changes in the near future. We hope they'll delight you and inspire you.

Till next time... *JH*

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My partner is a transgendered person (FTM) and we are both readers of Transgender Tapestry. We have noticed that there are not many articles on or about FTMs. There is really no specific magazine and very few books on this topic. We have been to drag king conferences, which are helpful and supportive, but to my partner this is part of his identity and not just entertainment.

The support groups available in our area are primarily for MTFs and even though they say they welcome FTMs, there are none in attendance. My partner could attend one of their meetings but doesn't feel they can fully identify with his issues.

Could you please make a connection with someone in the FTM community who would be willing to write one or two articles for each edition of Tapestry? Knowing there would always be something on this topic would help to validate that FTMs really do exist.

—Joanne Levi and my partner SP ✉

Tapestry *is committed to equity in content by and about FTMs and their significant others. Since I became editor in 1990, we've published every FTM-themed article we've received—and I expect the previous editors did also.*

Ten years ago, Jason Cromwell was kind enough to edit a special FTM issue of Chrysalis, *a magazine I edited at the time. It took him a full year to beg, bribe, wheedle, and cajole enough FTM-specific content to fill 60 pages. It's not that there's a lack of FTMs, but there certainly is a scarcity of FTMs who write. Those we know who do write tend to be overcommitted and unavailable and we wouldn't presume to further burden them—although we would be joyous to hear from them. Yes, this is a hint, Jamison Green!*

Perhaps someone who reads this will be inspired to write for Tapestry. *Perhaps you will—Ed.*

Now being in my sixties, I have vivid memories of my younger days, when blatant discrimination, especially by race, sex, and religion (to name just three) were condoned in our nation. Happily, the Civil Rights Movement and related causes resulted in such overt discrimination being outlawed; although discrimination has not been completely eradicated, it is certainly not acceptable to the great majority of us.

Perhaps as a result, and perhaps as a parallel, other less egregious forms of social ostracism have become generally acceptable. Although here, too, there's still a long way to go, it's become politically incorrect to tell Polish jokes and make other such derogatory stereotypical references to people on account of their ethnic origins, religious beliefs, or other such characteristics.

Certainly IFGE has been a strong advocate of legislative action and political correctness, primarily focused on gender-related issues, but extending to all forms of derogation on account of individual differences. Consequently, I found it disturbing to read Carla Fong's "The Twins" in the Summer 2002 issue. Although I generally enjoyed the piece, I was bothered by her words referring to the anesthetic and IV given her: that it "makes you pretty much indifferent to what's going on around you. Sort of like being a Republican, I guess."

Although I may be in a minority among the transgender community, I do consider myself a Republican. I don't always support, and in some cases I actively oppose, some of the leaders and positions taken by the party. I subscribe to the general principles of the party, but vote for Democrats and Independents almost as often as I do Republicans—but I am not, nor are most other Republicans I know, indifferent to what's going on around us. Quite the contrary, we are very much aware and frequently quite concerned. We and Ms. Fong may disagree in our political beliefs, but disagreement and indifference are different things.

Had Ms. Fong been addressing a position taken by the Republican Party or by some of its leaders, and in so doing expressed an opinion contrary to mine, that would have been fine. That's what we're all about in this country. But for no apparent reason other than to be funny or cute, to apply a derogatory stereotype to the millions of us who regard ourselves to be Republicans is something else altogether. And despite the disclaimer in the front of the magazine that the editorial content of the magazine might or might not reflect the opinion of IFGE, I am surprised that you, as editor, didn't excise Ms. Fong's remark. It had absolutely nothing to do with the story, and appears to be nothing more than a gratuitous slur intended to negatively stereotype those of us whose political affiliations differ from those of Ms. Fong and perhaps yourself.

Perhaps the best-known and most admired Republican in our history was Abraham Lincoln. Do you regard him as having been indifferent to what was going on around him? How about Secretary of State Colin Powell, who is said to be frequently at odds with President Bush? Is he indifferent to what's going on around him in the executive offices of our country? I hardly think so. And how about former New York Mayor Rudy Giuilani? In my opinion, his public appearances in those trying times following the terrorist attacks reflected anything but indifference to what was going on. Quite the contrary, even his political opponents expressed appreciation for the concern and sensitivity he demonstrated to what was happening.

My intent in writing this letter wasn't to disprove Ms. Fong's characterization of Republicans. I neither need nor want to do that. I think our actions adequately accomplish that. However, considering your magazine's previously consistent (I think) opposition to such derogatory stereotypes, it ill befits you to apparently endorse one with which you happen to agree. I'm disappointed in you.

—Name withheld by request ✉

Constant reader, please skip the following paragraphs if you are humor-impaired.

Tapestry *is and should be non-partisan. We don't and won't champion or condemn either Democrats or Republicans, and we would not want the magazine to take on a partisan tone in favor of either party. It would be fantasy, however, not to acknowledge that those who object the loudest to equal protection of transgendered and transsexual persons under the Constitution pull the R lever in the voting booth in disproportionate numbers.*

We see no need to censor the political opinions of our authors, especially when they're joking. We find it remarkable that you take such umbrage at Ms. Fong's remark. In the immortal words of Foghorn Leghorn, "It's a—I say, it's a joke, son." Did you know Foghorn votes the straight—look at me when I'm talking to you, boy—Republican ticket? Omigosh! We've done it again!

Let us also say that yours is the first attempt of which we are aware to posit Republicans as eligible for protected status. It's a novel idea, positively Nixonian. Oops! I meant to say Draconian. We can't wait to see the studies by Dean Hamer on the XReP gene. Just kidding.

It's curious that you invoke Abraham Lincoln; we doubt he would recognize or approve of the Republican Party in its current form, hijacked as it has been by religious zealots who have pushed through an anti-gay, anti-choice, anti-trans platform. We suspect that Mr. Lincoln, like you, would vote his conscience. By the way, we applaud you for that. Here's hoping you can take your party back from the fanatics and make Mr. Lincoln proud.

And lest you Democrats find yourselves laughing—don't think you don't need to clean up your act, too.

Special Note on Your Editor's Political Affiliations

We're surprised you make assumptions about our political affiliations. The only overt partisan act of which our editor is guilty was voting in a Republican primary in 1974 so she could vote, at the request of a friend, for Lamar Alexander for Governor. That got her blacklisted for some years by Tennessee's yellow-dog Democrats. She, like this magazine, is neither a Democrat nor a Republican—nor would she care to be. She would certainly have allowed Ms. Fong to joke about Democrats, if Ms. Fong had chosen to do so.

To show you your editor isn't a Democrat, here's a Democrat joke:
Q: What is a Republican?
A: A Democrat who got mugged.

And, since we're not Republicans, here's a Republican joke:
Q: What is a Democrat?
A: A Republican who got arrested.

Uh-oh, we're going to hell now, for sure. Think there will be more Republicans there, or Democrats?—Ed.

Dear Miqqi,I wanted to let you know how much I appreciate your columns in Transgender Tapestry. Almost always they elicit in me, "Why yes, that's exactly how it is!"—but far more eloquently stated than I could have mustered. In the hope your writings may be of further value, I pass them on to my wife, who has a hard time reconciling that I have breasts and that we are addressed as ladies when we are out.

—Chloe ⊠

On City of Refuge

I read, with distaste, the article, "A City of Refuge" in issue #103. The author doesn't seem to grasp that a lot of Tapestry readers are Christian, and are offended by her ridicule of our beliefs. I'm not saying Christianity doesn't have its share of ultra-conservative Pharisees, but Christianity is not a political belief; it's a relational one. A true Christian is one who obeys the teachings of Jesus, the Christ, not one who just labels themself as Christian.

The author's references to "Christians Obey!!!," roadside conversions and "unruly masses," an ignored mother and child, and equating a fundamentalist with hate and bigotry are NOT appropriate for your publication. Deborah Greenway's references add nothing to the supposed point of the article, her experience at being accepted in the town of Eureka Springs. I must congratulate her for her efficiency—she is both wasting paper and offending readers, all in one page! And what do two photos of a statue have to do with an accepting town? Did she use all of her film on the statue, and have none left to remember the good times in town?

There's already too much hate in this world. PLEASE, Deborah, before you go off venting your religious views and blasting others, stop and consider the point you are making, and whether or not it will actually benefit someone.

—Lee Anne Ward
A Transgendered Christian ⊠

Ms. Greenway submitted a number of photos with her article. Our former art director chose the two that made it into print. Space prevented us from using the others, which included shots of Ms. Greenway and other attendees of the En Femme Getaway, the town of Hot Springs, and the amazing Bible Bar, the wrapper of which claims it includes the seven foods of Deuteronomy.

Ms. Greenway's comments on Christianity are reflections of what she saw as she drove through conservative, rural Arkansas on her way to the Getaway: billboards threatening her with hell, mock cemeteries of aborted fetuses, and a 70-foot concrete Jesus. It seems to your editor that she was making light of the undeniably bizarre character of the brand of Christianity practiced in the Arkansas countryside, and not Christians or Christianity in general—Ed.

Thank you for your magazine. While we don't agree with all of your articles we still wish Transgender Tapestry had been around when we were younger.

—Name withheld by request ✉

We don't agree with everything in the magazine either. That's the point—to publish a tapestry of voices and viewpoints. That means, of course, that occasionally someone will be offended. When that happens, we figure we're doing something right.

This magazine has been around twentysomething years, in one form or another. We wish it had been easier to find.

On Mollenkott and Gillespie

I have to say I was quite disappointed in David Gillespie's review of Virginia Mollenkott's Omnigender (Tapestry #102). Gillespie identifies what he considers a flaw in Professor Mollenkott's effort. Specifically, he asks this question about the point that troubled him: "Is it necessary or even helpful to tie the discussions of sexual desire to those concerning gender expression?"

The answer is yes! While Mr. Gillespie does concede the point that the author's analysis of Judeo-Christian teachings might shed some light on the question, this concession falls way short. Actually, a careful study of the history of Christian theology reveals that most religions had their origin through the efforts of the church fathers cited by Professor Mollenkott in her book, and that these men were instrumental in forming the binary construct we have today.

Mr. Gillespie's inference that these church fathers considered sex a gift from God is not entirely correct; their actual position was that sex was at best something to be tolerated and more preferably something to be avoided if at all possible. I suggest that these early church fathers were terrified by the power of sexual desire, no matter how or for whom it was expressed, because, as men, they saw not only that they couldn't control it, but that they were also susceptible to it. Also, it was suggested by some at the time that sexual desire was a consequence of original sin, which made it all that much more frightening.

The only solution these early church fathers saw to their dilemma about what to do with this extraordinary power was to condemn the idea that sexual intercourse, or even sexual need was good, and further, that in no way could it be positive and wholesome, even in marriage. They then established a theological standard to that effect, effectively ignoring what the Apostle Paul said. To support their position, ideas were incorporated from several philosophical disciplines of the time, specifically that while men by their very nature were strong, virile, dominant and sexually aggressive, women were expected to be weak, humble and submissive.

The result is that today we are all forced to live in one of two genders, because almost everyone in society has been taught this binary construct from birth. The challenge to all of us, gay, straight and transgendered, is to show that while there is a distinction between sex and gender, it is not threatening, disruptive or offensive—nor should it take away from the fact that all people are human beings, entitled to the same respect, courtesy, and they deserve to be treated with the same dignity, regardless of how they present or express themselves. As such, there should be no need for categories like men and women or male and female.

A better answer to Mr. Gillespie's question might be that it's unavoidable in today's society, due to society's myopic view of sex and gender, a view that must be changed through education. Should it be necessary? Of course not.

There are few who are willing to take up this challenge, Professor Mollenkott is one of them. While it is true God gave us two ears but only one mouth, God also gave us one heart. Because our heart is bigger than all three, it should be all the better to speak from—and all the better to listen with.

—Rev. Sarah Anne Carpenter ✉

Reverend Carpenter buttresses her arguments with discussion and quotation from scripture, which we have not included due to considerations of space. Readers who would like the unedited version can obtain it from Rev. Carpenter by sending her e-mail at Psac9604@aol.com.

When I asked the question to which Rev. Carpenter referred in her response to my review, I was not attempting to argue the historicity of joining the discussions of gender expression and sexual desire. My point was simply that it seems to me both issues would be done greater service, at this time and at this stage of our national-cultural development, to separate them. In other words, does who I want to have sex with —more specifically, the moral and legal standings of those desires and acts—really have anything to do with how I express my inward notions of gender? I think not.

To keep the issues joined seems to me to buy into cultural-social constructs of the past which defined maleness and femaleness in sexual terms—to wit, active and passive, penetrator and penetrated. Such confusion could, and indeed I would argue does, account for the rampant "sissyphobia" of the gay male community. Or, as one young transgendered individual recently writing in The Advocate *put it: "I am frustrated with how terribly misunderstood we are, often confused with either homosexuals or transvestites."*

For the sake of clarity, let's keep the discussions apart... at least for now.

—David R. Gillespie, M.Div.

You Can Make a Difference!

IFGE is always in need of talented individuals to help us help the transgender community, whether your background is in accounting, web design or anything in between. If you would like to volunteer your skills write to: office@ifge.org or call 781.899.2212.

Trankila Redux

Like Brianna Corbett, I seldom write to editors to express my opinion—but her comments about Trankila need to be addressed. I also attended the 2001 Southern Comfort Conference. Trankila's appearance was as Brianna described—psychedelic outfits, full beard—the whole thing. Frankly, I was a bit frightened.

I was waiting in line to enter the dining area for dinner, talking with a friend, when she introduced me to Trankila, who was standing a few feet in front of us. I swallowed my fears and had a conversation with Trankila. I found her to be a thoroughly delightful and nice person. She totally dispelled my fears. In the couple of years since, I have often thought of that encounter.

The first lesson I learned when I was a rank newbie, attending my first SCC, frightened out of my high heels, was that our community is about diversity, if nothing else. When I saw Christine Hochberg that first morning at SCC, I was even more frightened, but a few kind words from her put me at ease, and I knew she really has a heart of gold. I realized that we, of all people, need to accept others' diverse expressions. None of us fit society's norms, yet we demand acceptance of that society.

Brianna doesn't have to become Trankila's friend; if she wishes to remain at a distance, that is her right—but I would hope the umbrella of the trangender community is big enough for people like Trankila. And I would hope more of us feel that way, rather than how Brianna does. Not knowing Trankila is, unfortunately, Brianna's loss.

—Jennifer Shaw ✉

Indeed it is—Ed.

Apparently Brianna Corbett has self-doubts about her own present position in life, and as a consequence is prone to shy away from even the most inconsequential of associations, in some vain hope she will have a better go at being accepted as the genetic female I am assuming she is not. How tragic. How intolerant.

What else is Ms. Corbett eschewing or otherwise not doing because of her self-doubt? Does she not understand that you get only this one second chance to live life to the fullest, having somehow not done it right the first time? And does she not also understand that when the smell of intolerance is loose on the land, it is precisely those like Trankila who are the first to be snuffed out?

That said, I wonder if Ms. Corbett would have written her letter to the editor if she had looked beyond Trankila's fuck-me pumps and beard and engaged her in conversation? If she had, she would have heard that Trankila, like any other sane gender-variant person on this planet, picks the time and place to don her gay apparel. And that she, like Ms. Corbett, has a sense of propriety (albeit not so rigid), as well as a strong sense of self-preservation and, as a consequence, is not likely to bring undue shame on herself or those she is with.

Because, if Trankila cannot attend an IFGE convention, then what? Should those of us who are too tall, too wide, too hair-challenged, or too deep in the voice present ourselves for approval by the Ms. Corbetts of this community before attending an IFGE affair?

So, get over it, Brianna Corbett! It is my understanding that Trankila is bearded because her significant other prefers him that way and, as for the rest of her kit, well, you might take some lessons. Get wild, Brianna. Give yourself permission to buy those fuck-me pumps, and don't forget the long gloves. Live a little more, honey. Life is too short to be lived so blandly.

—Georgette Freeman ✉

Georgette Freeman is a 56-year-old transwoman living in San Francisco and a federal regulator in the financial sector who also has a penchant for high heels and short skirts.

It Becomes True When You Believe It

I was busy writing a book based on the topic of personal power and I was planning my high-powered public speaking career. Having worked for many years in a consulting position as training practitioner for a Fortune-500 company, and being told repeatedly that I had a gift for public speaking, I was cock-sure of succeeding. No doubts, no hesitation.

On the surface, it all looked too perfect: I was a well-educated, clean-cut, married white male with a great book and super speaking skills. Everywhere I consulted, I had the Midas touch. The world's largest organizer of conferences had headhunted me to speak at a conference before I had even launched my speaking career.

I had one small problem though—at least part of the time, behind bolted doors and drawn curtains—I preferred being a girl. I had a fear second to none. It's one thing sneaking out after dark as a cross-dresser when you're Mr. (or is that Miss?) Nobody, but another thing altogether when you're a known author and public speaker. The fact that the speaker's circuit is conservative didn't help either. I had a fear of being caught. I was so deep in the closet that I couldn't see daylight.

One day, while attending a conference as a delegate, the speaker said something I had heard a hundred times before—and I had even said it in my own book. She said that what you expect is what you get.

What was I expecting? I was

expecting problems, rejection and ridicule. I was expecting certain failure if I was exposed. I had to restrain myself during the conference from jumping up and screaming, "Stop!" to my negative expectation and myself. How could I have been so blind and stupid? Why was I expecting problems when what I actually wanted was solutions?

In an instant, I realized I could succeed in a skirt, I could be a winner because of the content of my character rather than because of my clothes. I realized I could succeed if I backed myself. In an instant, I realized I really could get what I expect. All things were indeed possible. I just needed to believe it before I expected others to.

When I changed my expectation, I changed my world and my future. I told my friends, I told my family, I told my work colleagues about my other side. I went to my publishers as Jill Devine rather than as Julian Quinton. I expected positive reaction, and that's what I got. I felt like the world was finally off my shoulders.

Today, because of a changed expectation and a changed belief, I'm on a new road to my dreams. It's not true that you cannot have your cake and eat it too. And the cake tastes great!

Life might not be perfect, but it's much more than just palatable. Reality is but a perception—change your perception and you change your world.

—Jill Devine ⊠

From Dr. Lawrence

In Issue #104 of Transgender Tapestry, an uncredited article (pp. 53-54), presumably written by editor Dallas Denny, referred to the 1997 allegation of medical misconduct made against me and publicized on Andrea James' web site. In the best traditions of yellow journalism, Denny neglected to include the response she sought and obtained from me in August 2003: that I had been cleared of any wrongdoing in the investigation conducted by the Washington State Medical Quality Assurance Commission. Denny also neglected to include my denial of another allegation made by James, even though she again sought and obtained a denial statement from me in August 2003.

Perhaps Denny feared that if she honored her past representations to me—and the canons of responsible journalism—she would have been less effective in smearing me. Denny's conduct raises serious issues of editorial fairness. Perhaps it is time for the IFGE Board to investigate Denny's behavior as editor of their magazine.

What appears to rankle Denny and her allies, Andrea James and Lynn Conway, is that Ray Blanchard's theory of autogynephilia and his resulting taxonomy of transsexualism are demonstrably valid, in the only way that scientific theories and taxonomies are ever valid: They convincingly explain empirical observations, and they generate useful predictions. Since Denny and her allies cannot refute the validity of Blanchard's theory, they resort to the tricks of desperate debaters everywhere: They attack the character of those who disagree with them. The resulting ad hominem smears of Dr. Blanchard, Dr. J. Michael Bailey, and me have been staples on the web sites of Conway and James for months. Now Denny is engaging in smear tactics of her own.

Denny, James, and Conway will no doubt continue their desperate campaign of character assassination. Ray Blanchard, Michael Bailey, and I will continue to conduct scientific research about autogynephilia and transsexualism, and to publish our results in refereed scientific journals and in books and articles intended for more general audiences.

—Anne A. Lawrence, M.D., Ph.D. ⊠

Dallas' Reply

Dr. Lawrence is referring to a bullet list of the more important events in the drama surrounding J. Michael Bailey's The Man Who Would Be Queen. *We mentioned Andrea James' essay about Lawrence because it fit into that timeline. We did not editorialize; we were merely reporting what had happened. We did not include in the timeline an official response by Lawrence; that's because she chose not to make one.*

In August 2003, we spoke to Lawrence via telephone to question her about James' allegations and about the earlier incident at Swedish Hospital in Seattle. This transpired not because Lawrence's name appeared in the bullet list, but because we had been sitting for more than a year on a claim similar to the one made by James. We were moving cautiously forward with an editorial about Lawrence (it appears in this issue on p. 13), and wanted to give her a chance to respond to the various allegations that had been made about her, and to address questions we had about her level of training and credentialing in regard to her therapy practice.

The editorial includes Lawrence's denial of the incident at Swedish Hospital, which in fact skirts the issue of her actual behavior. It also includes Lawrence's denials of the allegations made by Donna Cartwright and Andrea James regarding her behavior in vaginal photography sessions.

If this is yellow journalism, we plead guilty.

Afterword: *While we share the negative opinion of J. Michael Bailey's book with Lynn Conway and Andrea James, and while we have worked cooperatively with each other (as we have worked cooperatively with Dr. Lawrence), our methods differ. We do not condone the personal attacks made by Conway and James' via their websites. Nor have* Tapestry *or your editor engaged in such personal attacks—or will we.*

And finally: *Your editor agrees with Lawrence that empiricism is the crucible by which scientific theories stand or fall. I have made no particular effort to publicly refute Blanchard's or Lawrence's theories, although I may well publish on the subject someday. I part company with Lawrence—and Bailey—however, in their less than facile attempts to use Blanchard's theory of autogynephilia as a bludgeon. How can they expect discourse to remain civil when they dismiss those of us who interpret our experiences differently as in denial and in need of therapy?—Ed.*

Concerns About Dr. Anne Lawrence

In June 2003, Andrea James published on her website, www.tsroadmap.com, a disturbing article about Anne Lawrence's behavior. Although James' article is in part an *ad hominem* (i.e., personal) attack, her allegations about Lawrence's conduct are nonetheless of concern; in fact, they mirror our own long-held apprehensions and provide corroborating evidence to previous allegations we have received about Lawrence's behavior.

The Swedish Hospital Incident

In her on-line article, James describes and links to images of supportive documentation for an incident that occurred in 1997, in which Lawrence, who was employed as an anesthesiologist at Seattle's Swedish Hospital, allegedly performed an inappropriate and unauthorized vaginal inspection of an unconscious patient. This action resulted in an investigation by Washington officials and was followed by Lawrence's resignation from the hospital staff. Lawrence no longer practices as an anesthesiologist.

Lawrence told *Transgender Tapestry*, "The circumstances of my departure from Swedish Hospital were investigated in detail by the Washington State Medical Quality Assurance Commission. The commission found no evidence of unprofessional conduct. I was not reprimanded or disciplined in any way and there was no action taken against my license. I maintain and have always maintained an unrestricted Washington state medical license."

The Vaginal Photography Incidents

James also describes an incident of alleged inappropriate boundary crossing in Lawrence's photography of James' genitals for Lawrence's website www.annelawrence.com. James says Lawrence was inappropriately seductive while James had her clothes off. Lawrence denies this.

There's more to the story. A year or so ago, Donna Cartwright, another transsexual woman, described to *Tapestry* an experience virtually identical to that reported by James. At that time we chose not to go forward with an unverified allegation. This allegation has now been substantiated in the form of James' complaint. Lawrence denies this incident also.

INITIAL REVIEW PANEL
CASE PRESENTATION
Case Number: 97-05-0042MD

Date 09/17/97 12:06 PM
Presented by James H Smith

Respondent Lawrence, Anne A., MD

Complainant Swedish Health Services

CASE SUMMARY

The Respondent Board Certified in Anesthesiology, DOB 11/17/50, licensed since 77

The Complainant Swedish Health Services

The Complaint NPDB Adverse Action Report

Case Review Swedish Health Services reports that after an incident involving the respondent's professional conduct occurred, she resigned from the medical staff. Reports and statements were obtained from the hospital which indicate that the respondent, who was the attending anesthesiologist, performed a genital exam on an anesthetized patient. The patient from Ethiopia was placed in a low-lithotomy position. The circulating nurse noted that the patient was already shaved. The respondent came around the end of the table and asked if the patient had her genitalia altered. The GYN responded "No." The respondent asked "Are you sure that she has not been circumcised?" The GYN responded "She has not." R states "She looks like she had something done, she doesn't look right." The GYN replied "It probably looks different because she shaved herself, which may be a cultural thing." The respondent replied "I still think she has something done" to which the GYN replied "No, its just aging." The GYN then left the OR to scrub. The respondent then put on an exam glove and checked the patient's genitals. The respondent states "Oh, there is her clit, I guess she is OK." and then returned to the head of the bed.

The respondent, both in a letter to the hospital and to the Commission, admits to a serious lapse in judgment. She indicates that she had no bad intentions, no desire to harm, to degrade, or exploit. The respondent decided to resign rather than face the possibility that the incident could become public and have adverse affects on her young children, the reputation of the hospital, the privacy of the patient, and on her professionally.

Some background is relevant. The respondent has practiced anesthesiology in Seattle for nearly 20 years without problem.

Prior Cases None

While a photography session is not a medical treatment setting, the specialized vaginal photography done by Lawrence sets up a clear power differential, with the subjects being of necessity unclothed and vulnerable. Certainly a licensed physician should be aware of and respect this vulnerability.

Credentials for Counseling

There is another concern. Lawrence provides counseling for considerable numbers of transgendered and transsexual clients. Counseling is, of course, another setting fraught with power-over dynamics.

Lawrence is trained as a physician, an anesthesiologist. She recently attended the Institute for the Study of Human Sexuality at San Francisco, where, in 2001, she earned a Ph.D. degree in human sexuality. While it's laudable that she took this training the Institute offers only limited clinical training and supervision. So far as we have been able to determine, Lawrence has never been in a counseling or psychotherapy training program and does not have the training and has not had the clinical supervision necessary to properly do this sort of work—nor does she seem to have a license to do counseling.

Because an M.D. confers wide privilege, and because we are unfamiliar with the licensing laws in Washington State, where Lawrence has based her practice, we won't say that what Lawrence is doing is illegal, but it is in our estimation improper and unethical for her to operate in a sphere in which she has not been trained and credentialed, and doubly inappropriate in light of her past behavior.

Considering Lawrence's history of apparent inability or unwillingness to control herself in clinical and clinical-like settings, we are concerned that her clients may be subjecting themselves to danger.

... And That's the Way It Is

by Monica F. Helms

As always, Dallas has given me more work than an Army pack mule. She even has a mule whip in her office to keep me and the other columnists in line. I suspect some act up on a regular basis just so Dallas can pay them a private visit with the whip. I don't understand. Am I missing something here?

Life has made an interesting turn on the personal front. An old debt caught up with me, and I got a notice to appear in court. Because I plan on filing for bankruptcy, I asked a trusted friend for a name of a good lawyer. From what I understand, the word bankruptcy is about as commonly used in our community as the word gender. I'm not scared, because I know it will ultimately help make my credit better. I declared bankruptcy back in 1990, seven years BM (Before Monica). I just can't wait for this to be over.

Something else has begun to hit me hard. Burnout. After five years of activism, I'm feeling the pressure to slow down. I've taken on many tasks, and there are some important ones looming in the future. The thrill of victory is not the drug it used to be, and the pain of failure cuts deeper each time. The 38 names that had to be read this Day of Remembrance drained the energy from my soul.

On top of that, the responsibility that comes with being a part of the Transgender American Veterans Association has increased tremendously, and I wish to focus my energy and time there. This doesn't mean I will stop doing this column *(Darn!—Dallas)*. I won't give up the column until they pry my cold, dead fingers off of my keyboard. After all, I have an ego the size of Mt. Rushmore, and I have to keep it fed somehow. (Also, I have a feeling Dallas would actually miss me. Don't tell her I said that.)

We Finally Face the Wall

Transgendered veterans from across the country will meet in Washington, D.C. on May 1, 2004 to participate in a historical event for our community. The first ever Transgender Veterans March to the Wall will take place on that day, to show we served proudly.

Back in September 2001, Angela Brightfeather, who was a drill sergeant in the Army during the Vietnam War, came up with the idea of having transgendered veterans march to the Vietnam Memorial. The idea is to honor our fallen comrades-in-arms and to heal from the emotional wounds war inflicted on us. She got the idea from visiting the Wall with thousands of Harley-Davidson riders over the years. She felt transgendered veterans should do something like that, for all the same reasons. Angela never gave up on this wonderful idea, and when she became the Special Projects Director for TAVA, she finally had a vehicle to make her idea come true.

There are many reasons why the Transgender Veterans March to the Wall should happen.

When asked why we need to do the March, Angela said, "There are many reasons why the Transgender Veterans March to the Wall should happen. Most of those reasons lie within our own hearts and the pride with which we served our country, and to finally pay our respects to our service members and friends, as we should, and in a way that they never knew us, as people of transgender experience."

The schedule includes a reception at the Radisson Barcelo Hotel on the evening of April 30 and a farewell breakfast on Sunday morning, May 2. On Saturday, the group will visit both the Wall and the Iwo Jima Monument. In the afternoon, we'll be laying a wreath at the Tomb of the Unknowns. It will be the first time in history that any transgender group has officially laid a wreath at the Tomb (it's important to note that as of the time this issue of *Tapestry* went to press, TAVA had not received permission to lay the wreath at the Tomb, so there's a possibility the wreath-laying won't happen). Saturday will end with a dinner at a local restaurant.

It's my hope that we will have many transgendered veterans attend this first-ever event to show the world we indeed served in the military, and have been serving since our country began. We would like to see hundreds attend, but even if only 25 people show up, it will be a success.

A website has been specially set up by Joney Harper to provide information on TVMW. You can find it at: http://www.geocities.com/tg_vet_march_to_the_wall/.

Cannon Fodder

November saw the 5th Annual Transgender Day of Remembrance. Nearly 110 cities all over the world geared up to remember those transgendered murder victims with candlelight vigils, prayers, marches and speeches. As I mentioned earlier in this column, there have been 38 victims since the last TDOR, compared to 26 the year before. Six of those murders occurred in December 2002. There were 21 international victims. Five were in Italy, four in Guatemala, and there were two each in Canada, Chile, and Brazil.

Of the 17 American victims, three died in Washington, D.C., and two each in Houston and Indianapolis. D.C. is now one of the deadliest cities in the world for transgendered people, with Houston rapidly catching up. This is why I titled this segment Cannon Fodder. The murders of transgendered people have become an epidemic no one cares about. You don't see the Centers for Disease Control plotting these figures.

The F.B.I.'s Hate Crime Statistics for last year listed only eleven hate crimes toward GLBT people. Our deaths apparently aren't worthy enough to report to the F.B.I. A sniper kills six people in the D.C. area and is hunted down with the

full force of the F.B.I., yet when two transwomen are murdered in D.C. and one is nearly killed at the very same time, little effort is put into finding the perpetrators.

Local authorities and the Georgia Bureau of Investigation mounted an intense manhunt for a man who killed two real estate agents in Cobb County, tracking him down in Minnesota within a week. However, 13 transgender murders in Georgia—some going back to the early 1990s—remain unsolved. Not only are we being slaughtered at an alarming rate, most transgender murder cases gather dust in the cold case files. On top of that, those caught and convicted of murdering a transgendered person usually get light sentences.

On Thursday, November 20, we in Georgia once again stood in the shadow of the Georgia State Capital Building and read off the names of those killed for being different. Nearly 90 people showed up. We had an emotional event, as we had in the past. My words and the words of those speaking that night did nothing but echo off the walls of the buildings downtown, but we cried nevertheless. The people spoke beautifully about the 38 victims. Heaven knows how many names we will read next year.

You May Now Kiss My...

Okay, class, what is the most over-discussed subject in America these days? Michael Jackson? Nope. Kobe Bryant? Not even close. The war in Iraq? A distant second. It's... marriage! When you attend an "illegal" same-sex marriage here in the good ol' U.S. of A., and the preacher says, "Is there anyone here who objects to the union between this man and this man, speak now or forever hold your peace," millions of hypocritical conservative Christians have the you-know-whats to object. They say that recognizing same-sex unions would be the ruination of the sacrament of marriage.

But wait! How can that be? Have same-sex couples contributed to the 50%-plus divorce rate? No! Have television networks spent millions of dollars relegating the sacrament of marriage to game-show status by having a man pick from 25 other men for the sole purpose of matrimony? No! So, who truly has led to the ruination of the sacrament of marriage? Heterosexuals—who else?

Do you realize that in some states, 14-year-olds can get married? Mass murderers, convicted rapists, and child molesters can get married. Even Michael Jackson can get married. In Las Vegas, a straight couple can be married by Elvis, even if they have known each other for only 10 minutes. Many men in America refuse to take responsibility for fathering children, and many young unmarried women will not say no to sex, popping out children like gumballs. Does any of this sound like the devious workings of gay and lesbians? Seems like heterosexuals don't need homosexuals to screw up the sacrament of marriage. They're doing just fine by themselves.

So, what does this have to do with transgendered people? you might ask. I'm glad you asked. Everything: a lot, very little, nothing. Pick one. There are as many opinions in the transgender community about this latest discussion on same-sex marriage as there are people in our community. Some are saying that if an amendment to the Constitution is passed to limit marriage to a man and a woman, it will be the end of life on this planet as we know it. That's exactly what the conservative Christians are saying will happen if an amendment doesn't pass.

Why all this fuss? A Massachusetts court recently ruled that their state couldn't discriminate against same-sex couples and ordered state legislators to fix the discriminatory situation within six months. This has fueled the fires against same-sex marriages. Where are those life-ending asteroids we keep hearing about? It seems we can sure use one now.

What's interesting in all of this is that there are no legal definitions for man and woman in the U.S. legal system. The Defense of Marriage Act has never been challenged on that basis, and the proposed Federal Marriage Amendment would be built on the same two undefined terms. If conservative Christians found out, they could create definitions that would screw transsexuals, changing their legal sex status. This is what has generated all the doom and gloom predictions.

Don't worry about me mentioning the lack of definitions here. I'm willing to bet *Transgender Tapestry* is not on the Concerned Women for America's recommended reading list *(and if it is, thank you very much, Beverly LaHaye—Dallas).*

Same-sex marriages affect our community because many transgendered people are attracted to the same sex—but the fight for same-sex unions will be fought mostly by the gay and lesbian communities. They are already pushing this like spammers on the Internet push Viagra. Conservatives are pushing in the opposite direction. In fact, if the G.O.P.'s plan is to turn the focus of the voting public away from the President's many failings by whining about same-sex marriages, they're succeeding.

Monica Helms *is the founder and current President of the Transgender American Veterans Association and Executive Director of Trans=Action, Georgia's transgender advocacy organization. She serves on boards of various Georgia groups, and is a winner of the 2003 Trinity Award. She can be reached via e-mail at: manicahelms@earthlink.net.*

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Transcending Genders #2

A monthly look into transgender lives for mental-health therapists.

How is it that Cher could alter her nose, breasts, thighs and buttocks to little public comment while dentist Richard Raskind underwent a little plastic surgery, hidden from all but the most intimate social intercourse, and caused a furor? What is unusual about the bell curve of economic success as it describes transgenders?

Harry Benjamin Was a Hero

by Judy Osborne

For people old enough to remember the sixties, news of Kennedy's assassination arrived with such emotional force that almost everyone recalls exactly what he or she was doing at that moment. Transgender people who were alive and aware a decade earlier have another such memory filed away.

"Ex-GI Becomes Blond Beauty" the *New York Daily News* headline screamed on a day in October of 1952. Radio stations and newspapers repeated ever more sensationalistic versions of the story. By nightfall, people everywhere had heard the news. Transgender people mired in lifelong isolation discovered suddenly that there was someone else; that others like us existed somewhere. So emotional was the news that each of us remembers exactly what we were doing at the moment we heard.

The story, and Christine Jorgensen's long-lived celebrity after she came back from Denmark, brought out a torrent of applicants seeking hormone therapy and sex reassignment surgery.

Christian Hamburger, the scientist and endocrinologist who managed Jorgensen's care in Denmark, soon found himself overwhelmed by applicants for similar services. Into the breech stepped a U.S. endocrinologist and sexologist named Harry Benjamin. He began performing triage soon thereafter for a horde of men desperate to become women and a smaller but significant number of women equally desperate to become men.

Benjamin sought out psychologists, surgeons, and endocrinologists willing to work with transsexuals (he coined the term) and referred candidates to them. For more than a decade he carried on this work, culminating in 1966 with the publication of The Transsexual Phenomenon, a classic work in which Benjamin organized his unique set of observations as a guide to others.

By the late 60's, a number of medical and mental health resources were serving the needs of transsexuals, the most prominent in the United States being the Johns Hopkins Gender Identity Clinic which had opened in 1965. Considerable controversy remained attached to the physical treatment of transsexuals. A lack of long-term follow-up studies rendered the treatment modality vulnerable.

J.K. Meyer and D.J. Reter of Johns Hopkins in 1979 published a longitudinal study of satisfaction and regrets which concluded that sex reassignment surgery offered no significant benefits. Though the study was widely criticized for flawed methodology, media coverage of its results and criticism from other sources caused the Johns Hopkins Gender Identity Clinic to close late in 1979. (A long string of subsequent studies have indicated long-term dissatisfaction in the one to two percent range.)

The controversy highlighted a need for a set of standards to guide professionals evaluating and treating transsexuals. And so, named to honor the pioneer who devoted the final years of his practice to serving the gender conflicted (a designation some of us like better than "dysphoric"), the Harry Benjamin International Gender Dysphoria Association (HBIGDA) was born.

The HBIGDA was designed by professionals for professionals. Although significant numbers of transgender psychologists, surgeons, and endocrinologists existed even then, few if any felt comfortable about revealing themselves to their peers. The first version of The Standards of Care (SOC), issued by the Association in 1979, contained little or no input from the consumers they affected.

The SOC assigned a "gatekeeper" role to mental-health professionals, requiring patients seeking opposite gender hormones or sex reassignment surgery to get specific kinds of approval from specific kinds of therapists. Since transsexuals tend to be relentless, impatient and intractable in pursuing their lifelong quest for a change in gender, mental-health professionals came to be viewed primarily as roadblocks keeping transsexuals from attaining their urgently-felt goals.

To make matters worse, the original SOC were rigid. Individual differences in the integrity of people's approaches to their transsexualism were ignored by the original standards, as were variations in knowledge and evaluative experience among mental-health counselors. The one-size-fits-all approach frustrated transsexuals who were ready to move on, encouraged manipulation instead of genuine therapy, engendered distrust, reduced the credibility of therapists who served our community, resulted in erroneous research, and interrupted the lives of people on their way toward healing.

The HBIGDA meets every two years. The cumulative changes to the SOC since 1979 have been breathtaking. Requirements for hormones and surgery are far less rigid. Transgender professionals and well-studied laypeople not only are sought out as members and presenters; at least a few are current and past members of the HBIGDA board.

Nevertheless, controversy over the SOC continues to rage among transgenders. Some resentment surely is left over from earlier times, but other issues continue to demand resolution before peace can reign. Issue No. 4 will trace the evolution of the SOC since 1979 and look at unresolved issues, our anger at gatekeepers, and alternatives to the SOC. *JT*

I hope you are finding this information interesting and useful. You're welcome to contact me at heyjude@eskimo.com.

Ask Ari

Dear Ari,

I began my transition two years ago with my ex-wife's support (sort of). At first she really seemed happy that I was finally becoming myself, but lately she has been difficult to get along with and I feel she's trying to take my kids from me. My son is seven years old, and my daughter is 10, and they both "know," but I'm not sure they understand. Recently, my ex yelled at me on the phone and told me the children could never call me "Mommy." This hurt my feelings. What do you think the kids should call me? Daddy doesn't really fit anymore, does it?

Just sign me "Parent"

Dear Parent:

You are raising one of the most troubling issues I see in my work with transsexual people and their families. It's often difficult enough for family and friends to remember to use your new name and to get the pronouns right. When it comes to parental role titles, there's usually confusion and an active resistance.

There's a strong sense of ownership about the terms Mommy and Daddy, even when nobody is changing sex. When children are adopted, there's often a discomfort on the part of the adoptive parents, if someone refers to the birth parents as the mother and father. Not wanting to share their newly acquired parental status, adoptive parents will emphasis the word birthmother and birthfather.

During the transition process, the outside world can be so harsh, so unforgiving, so unwelcoming and judgmental, that we sometimes assume all difficulties in our human interactions are related to our gender issues. It's easy to assume your wife is rejecting your transition, when she may simply be unwilling to share what has always been her special and intimate name: Mommy.

Perhaps it's best to find your own name, and not borrow one being used by another family member. I wonder if your ex would be open to another term for female parent? Even in lesbian relationships, where there are two moms from the beginning, one is often called Mommy and the other Momma. Rarely in two dad families are both dads called "Daddy;" often, one uses Papa or Pop.

Sometimes, people borrow from other languages (e.g., Ima and Abba are Hebrew for mother and father). Sometimes people make up names or words that fit—words that sound like mommy (i.e., MeMe)—or their own unique words, even nonsense words, that become endearing by their use (my son used to call me Plum, which I suppose rhymes with Mum, but is, well, juicier!). One family settled on DeeDee, which sounded like Daddy, but had a female lilt to it. Another family uses BeDa for butch dad, which honors the transitioning parent's maleness, but also honors his history as a butch lesbian.

Sometimes, transsexual people themselves feel strange or uncomfortable switching titles. One transman said, "I've always been their mother. I birthed them. I just don't feel right asking them to call me Pappa, although I admit I love the sound of it." I encouraged him to ask his children what they wanted, and surprisingly enough, the children felt perfectly comfortable calling him Pappa. However, in this family, there was no other Pappa contending for the role.

The important thing is what matters to you. Do you want to remain Daddy even it raises eyebrows on the street? Or do you hate the reminder of your life as a male, and not want to bring anyone's attention to you in this way? Do you want to share the word Mommy with you ex, or would you prefer to be called by your new female name? How about if you sat down with your family and discussed it with them? Maybe your ex just wants to be included in what can be an important and lifelong decision.

What your children call you is no small thing. Children often have the best and simplest solutions; maybe this is a decision in which they can have an active part. Be aware that some children fear losing the parent that is transitioning; letting go of your title as Daddy or Mommy can be very hard for them.

Establishing a relationship with your children (and your ex) as a parent who was once a man (or at least looked like one) and is now a woman involves avoiding potential landmines. In many ways the complication of naming is a metaphor for these other issues. Children want to know if you will still watch monster trucks on television with them, and still go fishing with them. In our gendered world, they cling to traditional sex role behaviors that have defined you as their Daddy. They want to know what to tell their friends about your transition. How do they explain who DeeDee is when you sign their permission slip for the class trip?

Most children don't want your new title to bring excessive attention to your transsexual status, which is often exactly what you want. The question each family needs to ask is, "How can we honor this transition with an appropriate naming, and not have the name we choose continue to bring attention to anything unusual about our relationship?" Naming is a sacred act, an act of great courage that confirms an identity. The name you choose to have your children call you should honor this life transformation.

***Arlene Istar Lev**, CSW-R, CASAC, is a therapist specializing in warking with LGBT families at Chaices Counseling and Consulting www.chaicescansulting.cam in Albany, New Yark. She's a mam, educatar, activist, and the authar af twa baoks, Transgender Emergence: Therapeutic Guidelines far Warking with Gender-Variant Peaple and their Families (2003, Hawarth Press), and Haw Queer: LGBT Parenting (farthcaming, Penguin Press).*

The Power of Clothing

by Miqqi Alicia Gilbert

Part 2 of 2

When we left off I was pontificating on the importance clothing plays in establishing who and what we are. We all know this and act accordingly, as, for example, when we carefully choose just the right clothes for a job interview. For the interview, you want your choice of clothing to establish that you are the sort of person being sought. You'll dress one way for a corporate position and quite another for a job as a salesclerk in a grunge clothing store. Clothing expresses who you are and also what you know. By applying for the grunge job while wearing a J. Crew outfit, you've clearly shown you're not the right person for them—you don't know enough. A male going on an interview or a first date often takes a fair bit of time and care with his appearance, while most women take that time and care most of the time. They're taught they are always under scrutiny, always being judged, always on display.

Clothing, then, expresses who we are by our choice of styles, colors, and image. It also says how much we know by showing that we're aware of what to wear, when to wear it, and how to carry it off. Finally, clothing and our ability to wear it shows what we are worth. The guy in the $3000 Armani suit declares his worth when formal, just as he does when informally wearing a cashmere sweater and Gucci loafers. Wearing the right thing at the right time and wearing it well establishes your place in any number of hierarchies. This is the case for men, but it is infinitely more so for women.

I now need to take a detour, but I'll come back to the main theme through a side door. The detour is to look more closely at what a crossdresser does with clothes and why he does it. (In fact, this is relevant to some transsexuals as well, but not quite as much.) There are a couple of central facts about a crossdresser that have a large impact. The first is that he came to crossdressing around puberty. He may have felt feminine yearnings earlier, but likely began to eroticize women's clothing more or less around the time he discovered masturbation. This is important, because it means he lost out on an enormous era of pre-pubertal socialization, when he wasn't really paying attention to what it means to be a female. (This is also true of the so-called secondary transsexual, or, as I prefer, adult-onset transsexual.) So when, some time later, he begins playing with outfits, his taste will go to the erotic and exotic, since he has never had the usual girl-to-girl social limitations placed upon him.

There's another important factor in a crossdresser's choice of clothing, and that is the amount of time one has to dress. A typical crossdresser may get to dress once a month, and if that's all the opportunity you get, you sure don't want to put on a set of sweats. In fact, the more often someone gets to dress, the likelier it is they will experiment with casual and comfortable clothing. Gals who come to Fantasia Fair for a full week almost always end up in slacks at one point or another. With a time frame like that, you get to explore more options than cocktail outfits, and can begin to learn what appropriate dress means.

There has also been some change in this regard, change I would call progress. Ten years ago, when I attended my first Fantasia Fair, a good half of the first timers trekked to the orientation wearing heels, which is not an easy feat on Provincetown's uneven streets. The past few years, there have been hardly any not wearing flats. This change reflects the way crossdressers are learning from each other and by investigating the Internet and how they are learning to care more about being appropriate.

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Why do I care about this? Because clothing is powerful. How you dress and how you present yourself declare volumes about what you know and who you are. When you're being a woman, you are expressing what your womanness is about by how you display yourself. It's important to remember that women are always on display, always being assessed and judged as objects as well as people (in fact, if the people part is included, then, as a woman, consider yourself lucky). That means the message you're sending needs to say how smart, self-possessed, available, sexual, and feminine you are. Your dress can say you are a sophisticated person who is feminine and sensible, or it can say you are an inexpe-

rienced crossdresser who needs a lot of help. If your goal is to pass, then you simply must blend in. If your goal is to drag it up and attract attention, then, by all means, blend out.

While you're doing all this, you can come to understand many things. You can understand why a significant number of women simply choose to opt out and adopt a basic uniform of jeans or slacks and tops. Sometimes this is a political statement; at other times it's a function of convenience. You can also come to understand why the majority of women, those who don't opt out, take a good deal of time to select an outfit, accessories, and makeup. They know they're doing a lot more than getting dressed. Whether they think about it on a daily basis or not, they know they're sending a message, making a statement that will be examined and read by everyone they encounter. Remember the gala affair? Perhaps the Academy Awards on TV? How long does it take a man to decide which tuxedo he's going to wear? Then compare that to the gender that is going to be examined and critiqued by Joan Rivers. Understand that in our culture women are objects of display and they are subject to that kind of critique, and, yes, it's no accident that the critic is another woman. It has to be; men, mostly, don't know the rules.

Sometimes this is a political statement; at other times it's a function of convenience.

And this brings us full circle. As a crossdresser, especially as a crossdresser who wants to pass, you have to make it clear you know the rules. You have to be able to read the message you are sending, the statement you are making, and examine it critically. You need to separate the occasions on which it is OK to be lax from those on which it is important to be correct and precise. You need to understand that being overdressed is as bad as being underdressed, and that those numerous phone calls women make to each other about what they're wearing to the party are important business, not idle chatter. Why? Because clothing is powerful.

Your feedback is important to me. I need to know you're out there. Please drop a line to: miggi@gilbert1.net.

Suzanne Anderer, CPE

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My First Time

by Allana Allen

Your editor and transgender legend Virginia Prince in New Orleans during Mardi Gras. No, wait! They're on the balcony of the Crown & Anchor at Fantasia Fair 2002. That's Denise Leclair peeking out from behind the column. Photo: Beth and S.

I arrived in Provincetown on Sunday, the first day of Fantasia Fair, and couldn't even bring myself to walk into the inn where I had reserved my room, even though I was in boy clothes. I was so scared I drove past the inn twice and eventually parked in a public lot so I could walk around the town to go CD spotting before I could decide whether I had the nerve to try it myself. Either there were no other crossdressers in Provincetown that day, or they were so passable I certainly wouldn't fit in.

Disheartened, with tears welling in my eyes, I walked back to the car, where I sat for a very long time, trying to decide what to do. I had all but decided to forget this silly fantasy and make the three-hour drive back home when it came to me that the worst-case scenario was that I could simply check into my room and spend a pleasant week in this lovely little tourist town on Cape Cod—as a man. It took me more than two hours before I had enough nerve just to check in.

Locked safely inside my room, I somehow found the courage to unpack the four suitcases of women's clothing and lingerie I had brought with me. As I unpacked, hanging each item in the tiny closet or folding it neatly into the two drawers of the small dresser, Allana fought her way to the surface. What would it hurt if I dressed here in my room?

The transformation was somehow different this time than it had ever been before. For more than forty years I had slapped myself together haphazardly, and it had always been good enough. Something deep inside me, something I couldn't reach or even understand, was telling me that this time good enough wasn't good enough. This time I wasn't dressing to look like a woman. This time, I was a woman getting dressed.

I tried to let go and let Allana come to the surface as she had never been allowed to before. The inner struggle was one of the hardest things I had ever done, but slowly she fought her way out. In time, I stood before the dresser mirror looking and feeling more like a woman than I ever had before. It took me another hour and a large pair of woman's sunglasses to hide behind before I found the courage to actually open the door and walk out of my room.

Literally trembling in my panties, I fretfully walked the length of the hallway in my high heels, praying no one would open a door, step into the hall, and see me. My legs trembled as I descended the staircase to the lobby, and my eyes looked neither left nor right as I took the four or five steps from the stairs to the front door. Riddled with apprehension and nervousness, and overwhelmed with absolute fear, Allana pushed us out the door and I stepped into the real world, dressed as a woman, for the very first time in my life.

After what seemed an eternity, I finally reached the C&A and quickly headed for the side door.

I headed for Fantasia Fair headquarters at the Crown & Anchor Inn, just a couple of blocks away. It was the longest walk of my life. My heart was pounding so hard I truly thought it would leap right out of my chest.

Commercial Street, the main drag (no pun intended) in Provincetown, was filled with people. I just knew they could tell I wasn't a real woman. My stomach was one gigantic knot and my legs trembled with every step as I walked, but I marched on, keeping my eyes on the ground and looking up only to make sure I didn't stumble in my high heels.

After what seemed an eternity, I finally reached the C&A and quickly headed for the side door. The apprehension of what lay behind that door was nothing compared to the complete and overwhelming fear I was feeling out in the open.

Inside, I found a large meeting room similar to a small theater. A long table had been set along one wall, and three women sat behind it, papers covering every inch of the tabletop. Around the room were men and women(?) filling out forms.

When you spend your entire life inside the box, and the only time you ever express your inner self is when you are alone, the opportunity for conversation simply doesn't happen. As a result, you never really know what the woman within sounds like. I approached the table, never even considering to try to disguise my voice, and actually spoke for the first time ever in my life while dressed as a woman. In my own husky male voice I quavered out a nervous, "Hi, I'm here for Fantasia Fair."

I was greeted without so much as a strange glance, and as naturally as if they were talking to a real woman.

"Have you been to FanFair before?" I was asked.

"No" I replied, my masculine voice still quaking. I was handed a packet of papers and asked to fill them out at one

of the smaller tables and bring them back.

If it wasn't for the fact that I was so nervous, this could just as easily have been an everyday transaction at my local bank. There was such a calming sense of normalcy in the air that I could hardly believe what was happening. I filled out the papers and returned them to the same woman. Another woman started handing me more papers and began to explain that this one was a guide to the Fair and included a map of all the places in Provincetown where I would be going—these were lunch tickets for the different restaurants around town where the women would be eating. On and on she went, with me hearing less than ten percent of what she was saying because I was still so nervous.

The last thing she told me was that there would be a welcoming cocktail party at Crowne Pointe Inn at 5:30 and that she expected to see me there. It was now approximately 3:00.

Somehow, I had managed to make it this far without so much as causing a raised eyebrow. I was still nervous and still scared to death, because now I had to walk Commercial Street again to get back to my inn! I donned my sunglasses once more to hide my true identity, and ventured out into the open for the second time in my life!

The trip back to the inn was no easier than the trip down, and I was wet with perspiration, despite the cold ocean breeze, by the time I reached my inn.

I quickly ascended the staircase to my room without looking left or right. To this day, I couldn't tell you if anyone was in the lobby or even standing behind the desk.

I reached my room, slammed the door, and realized I had not breathed since I had left the C&A. BUT I HAD DONE IT! And I was so proud of myself!

I selected a black skirt suit with white stripes and a zippered jacket top to wear to the cocktail party, then spent the next two hours getting ready. When I was done, I checked myself out in the mirror—and went out anyway!

The one-block walk to Crowne Pointe was so short that I didn't have time to get scared. Besides, I was starting (mind you, only STARTING), to feel a little better. After all, I had managed to stroll outdoors twice already and no one had laughed at me, pointed fingers, or even snickered. I was amazed!

The cocktail party was absolutely fabulous! I had never been to one before, not even as a man. I was greeted at the door by the owners of Crowne Point, who very graciously welcomed me and THANKED me for coming. Nothing in my entire life had ever made me feel so much like a lady. I was directed to a bar where I was handed a cosmopolitan (a delicious pink mixed drink that looked very feminine and was served in a fluted glass). I began to mingle.

Some of the other Fair attendees were already there. Most seemed comfortable in this surrounding. People chatted over here and laughed and joked over there. I quickly noticed to my surprise that most didn't even try to disguise their voices. Some of the women were very beautiful and some were simply passable, but the vast majority were girls like me who would have a hard time sneaking past a blind man without being discovered.

Some of the women were very beautiful and some were simply passable, but the vast majority were girls like me who would have a hard time sneaking past a blind man without being discovered.

As I walked toward the rear of the house to what appeared to be the sitting area, I passed through a huge, beautiful, formal dining room with a banquet-sized table at one end and a baby grand piano at the other. The sitting room itself was lavishly appointed with beautiful furniture. I felt like a debutante.

I meekly squeaked out a few polite hellos as I walked past people and found a place to sit. Another woman struck up a conversation with me as if I were her long lost sister, and I soon started to become comfortable in this surrounding. It felt as if we were just a bunch a women out for an elegant evening.

Across the room, two beautiful genetic women were chatting away and laughing with two of our girls. When one of them walked past me, she paused to tell me my suit was gorgeous, and introduced herself. I nervously thanked her, but when she looked deeply into my eyes, I nearly died. She called her friend over, introduced her as her lesbian partner, then said, "Doesn't she have the most beautiful eyes you ever saw?" I could hardly believe my ears. I was being complimented by a real woman!

They began giving me pointers on eye makeup to enhance my eyes and beauty tips on eye shadow and face makeup. One of them took the zipper of my jacket and slid it down a bit to expose my (lack of) cleavage, explaining that if I took some makeup and put a little here and there it would give the illusion of cleavage. Then she pointed out that next time I should wear a black bra under the outfit. Perhaps I should have been embarrassed by that, but I wasn't. It was my first GIRL TALK, and I loved it. They made me feel so comfortable, like one of the gals, and we chatted like this was the way it was supposed to be!

Little by little, the rooms filled, until you could barely move, and little by little, more and more of Allana came to the surface. My knees went together automatically as my ankles crossed and slipped under my chair. My hands found themselves folded femininely in my lap, and I began to feel more comfortable in my female persona than I ever had in my life. This was Allana, and she was finally home!

When you've hidden inside the box for more than forty years, as I have, and it has become your entire, comfortable little crossdressing world, it's hard to even imagine that anything else exists. When your secret life has become so routine that your second self, screaming to come out, amounts to nothing more than another trip to the back of the closet to drag out those dusty suitcases where you keep your life hidden from view like one of Aunt Sophie's reindeer sweaters, and you double- and triple-check to make sure you've put it all away again so nothing is missed that might out you to your family and friends, even the mere idea of a life outside the box seems like a cruel joke.

To allow yourself to think, for even a second, that there might be a place outside that box, outside your secret little world, where you could go and be who you want to be in a real-world setting, surrounded by people who are literally

aching to give you all the support, encouragement, and love you could ever dream of, would surely be nothing more than fantasy.

But to suddenly find that it's not just some joke, it's not just a fantasy, that it's real, and does exist, to finally not just peek over the top edge of the box, but come out of the box completely and, for one preciously fleeting week of your life, experience the pure magical wonder of it, to be literally reborn and be able to hold in your hands everything you ever dreamed of and be allowed for the very first time to be a whole person, is such a wonderfully life-altering experience that it's well worth the personal hell it costs to then have to give it all up and go back into the box!

It took me three years to build up the courage to attend the Fair because I had never, that's right, NEVER set foot out of the house dressed as a woman before. You want to talk scared? I was petrified!

That first day, Sunday, was the turning point for me. Monday served to further build my confidence. By Tuesday, I was waltzing down Commercial Street and all over Provincetown with my "head up and tits out," walking my best female walk and looking people in the eye as I greeted them with a smile and a pleasant hello in a softer version of my own voice. In fact, I was so comfortable by Wednesday that I stopped a local woman on the street to ask directions.

"Excuse me," I asked, "but have I passed Napi's Restaurant?"

"No sir, er, ma'am," she blushingly replied.

I laughed, patted her femininely on the arm, and said "that's okay... I'm not sure yet, either."

We both laughed, and she said, "In that case, good morning. It's right down at the next corner." I thanked her, and as I began to walk away she said, "I hope you enjoy the week." I almost cried.

On Saturday night, the last night of the Fair, there was a very elegant final banquet and awards ceremony. One award, Miss Cinderella, is voted on by everyone who attends the Fair. This award goes to the first-timer who best overcame her fears and went on to enjoy her female identity throughout the Fair. By the night of the banquet I was so comfortable in my female identity that I was feeling as if this was the way life was supposed to be for crossdressers. Everything was just so natural that I felt like a princess in a fairy tale. I was stunned when I heard I was a runner-up for Miss Cinderella!

No, I didn't win it, and I didn't expect to, either. So many other wonderful sisters who were also there for their first Fair had overcome much more difficult obstacles than I. Besides, I wasn't trying to win an award, I was just enjoying, for the first time in my life, the freedom of being me. Still, I couldn't believe so many had actually voted for me. I cried like a lady!

Everyone knew where you were coming from. Everyone could identify with you.

EVERYONE in Provincetown was so nice to us and so accepting that it would be almost impossible to be uncomfortable there. I'm convinced that there is nowhere else in the world where I could have come so far in such a short period of time. During the week, I made many new friends and bonded with so many sisters. It was absolutely amazing! Everyone had the same story. Everyone knew where you were coming from. Everyone could identify with you. I met transgendered folks from all over the United States, from Mexico, Colombia, Canada, England, and even from as far away as Scandinavia, and every one of them was my girlfriend instantly! It's like a wonderful, worldwide, secret sorority, but instead of a secret handshake, we use skirts to identify each other.

Some were passable, others (like me) weren't. Some were tall, some short, some fat, some thin. Some had wonderful female voices and others sounded like truck drivers. One even had a full male beard! And every single one of them, EVERY ONE! was open, warm, friendly, unassuming, non-judgmental, completely accepting, and ready to offer a huge warm, heart-felt hug at the drop of a hat!

Throughout my lifetime, I have truly felt that I have been in the right place at exactly the right time only three times. The first two times were at the hospitals when my sons were born. The last was my first Fantasia Fair!

It's hard to describe what it's like to come out of the box for the very first time in your life, or to explain the overwhelming depth of suppressed emotions that come flooding to the surface in torrential waves when it finally happens. Unless you have experienced it yourself, it's impossible to convey in written words the wonderful feeling of absolute freedom to actually be the woman who has hidden deep inside the darkest recesses of your being for your entire life. It is an unequalled opportunity to explore your inner self, to evaluate your life, to learn who you truly are, and to laugh and to cry.

The hardest part of Fantasia Fair for all first-timers isn't taking that first step outdoors—it's leaving the Fair! They call it the pink fog—that extraordinary sense of self you acquire during the Fair—the

Photo: Dallas Denny

feeling of normalcy, wholeness, and oneness, a feeling that everything is now right in the world. It fills us with hopes and dreams and, sadly, the fantasy that we don't ever have to go back into the box.

For some that is true; Fantasia Fair is a turning point in their lives from which they never return. They go on to live their lives outside the box, being who they want to be. For others like me, sadly, it is not. Social pressures, work demands, and family relationships are too great to overcome and make it impossible for us to remain outside. The pink fog has special meaning to those of us who must pack our lives, our selves, back into those dusty suitcases and bury them deep into the back of the closet, back into the box once more. We must go on with only the memory of who we really are. We struggle each day to hold on to the identity and the love we found that week in Provincetown, as, day by day, it slips further and further from our grasp.

We try to return to who we were before the Fair, but that's impossible. To paraphrase a few lines from The Velveteen Rabbit: "Real isn't how you are made, real is what you become, and once you become real, you can never be unreal again." So a song on the radio, the faint scent of a certain perfume, the sound of high heels clicking across a room, or the fleeting memory of a special moment at the Fair wells up inside you until you find yourself driving down the road with tears streaming down your face.

Allana Allen *at can be reached at:*
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As a heterosexual male-to-female crossdresser, my story is like those of so many thousands of others who have had to hide their inner selves in order to conform to society's rules and survive in their world. I had lived inside the box for so long I had all but given up hope that there could actually be anything more to my life than occasionally dressing in women's clothes in the privacy of my room. But I was fortunate to find, and eventually muster the courage to attend, Fantasia Fair 2003 in Provincetown, Massachusetts.

To say Fantasia Fair was a life-changing experience would be a gross understatement, but I'm not here to sing the praises of the Fair. I'm here to tell you what it's like to finally find yourself, then lose yourself again.

My femme name is Allana Katie Allen. I like the name because the initials are A.K.A. and I like being an "Also Known As." The first and last names are variations of my middle name, Alan, and I took Katie in honor of my maternal grandmother, Mary Kate, who I never had the pleasure of knowing.

At this writing, I am fifty years old. I've been crossdressing for as long as I can remember and I'm not very passable. I've lived my life out of a closet (in the box, so to speak) for more than forty years, living each day with the fear I might be discovered, keeping my second self buried deep beneath a macho exterior. I was so good at it that it became second nature, and I thought surely this was just the way it was supposed to be.

My secret was uncovered by my first wife, and I came out to my now ex-girlfriend some years later. The words first wife and ex-girlfriend should give you some idea of how well they accepted me. And both times I purged, trying to figure out what was wrong with me and why I couldn't hold onto a relationship with a woman. But the woman inside me always tugged me back. Aside from my mom (who I regret not having come out to before she passed), Allana was the only "female" in my life that I could always count on to understand me and accept me for who I am. After all, she is the one who makes me who I am.

And so I resigned myself to live inside the box and accept what little happiness and infrequent pleasures dressing might afford me, in the solitude of my room and behind the locked doors and drawn shades. I never looked over the top edge of the box to see what might be on the other side, until I stumbled across the website for Fantasia Fair.

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The Power of One Little Pronoun

by Kathleen L. Farrell, Ph.D.

It has been more than two months since I experienced one of my most embarrassing moments as a therapist, and the memory still stings. In group therapy, I made the mistake of using the wrong pronoun. Strangely, I didn't hear myself do it, but I noticed her retreat. Since it was her first time in the group, after trying unsuccessfully to pull her into the discussion, I decided it was related to a low comfort level and let it go.

After the meeting, she asked to speak to me. She seemed angry. I was tired after a long day, but I tried to listen. Despite years of experience in dealing with every kind of emotion aimed at me, including anger and disappointment, I felt myself become defensive. At first I couldn't believe I had used "him" instead of "her." I was in denial. I said, "Are you sure that was what you heard? I am extremely sensitive to this issue. I don't think of you as male. I think of you as female."

Later, I would analyze this and recall what I noticed when Margaret came in. The seating was such that I saw her primarily in profile. For the first time, I noted she was right about her nose. Many times in individual therapy, she expressed the desire to have a nose job, and she thought her jaw line could be improved surgically. That evening, as the group gathered, I studied her, silently agreeing with her about her nose and disagreeing about her jaw line. I don't remember exactly how I phrased my thought, but it was something like, "She's right, her nose is detracting from a more feminine appearance."

In retrospect I'm 99% certain my thoughts matched her presentation. I thought of her as she.

From time to time, when seeing a male-to-female who is pre-op and dressed en femme, I've been struck by the thought: "She still has male body parts!" I stay focused on the gender presentation of the person. As a genetic, right-brained female, it's easy for me to relate to other female brains. This is not to say I don't notice when someone misses the mark. When Grizzly Adams is sitting in front of me and tells me he is planning to transition, I find myself pondering the improbability and thinking, "Perhaps I could refer this person to a colleague."

Sitting across from Margaret and feeling bad about being confronted, I found myself zeroing in on my feelings rather than concentrating on hers. Lost in denying my culpability, I could neither comfort her nor relate to how upset she was by what she believed she had heard. Then something in her certainty gave me pause. I struggled out of my denial, and, flushed with embarrassment, I began a feeble apology. I was so flattened by my own error, I didn't process her emotional distress. She left, and I was in shock. Then I noticed she had left the book behind that she had intended to borrow. I grabbed it and ran to the parking lot. She was at her car some distance away. I called her name and indicated the book. She shook her head in refusal and quickly drove off. I was left holding the tangible thing that could have brought her back.

I struggled out of my denial, and, flushed with embarrassment, I began a feeble apology.

A greater sense of disappointment in myself and a lesser concern for Margaret followed as I went through the motions of closing the office and driving home. I answered the telephone calls that were waiting on my voice mail, all the while thinking about how I had reacted to Margaret.

It was not until the next morning, after a sleepless night, that I began separating my feelings and assessing the clinical damage. My thinking became focused on the emotional toll it had cost Margaret, really looking at what I might have taken away from her and how this would affect her self-esteem in her battle to become herself. I hoped this would become an opportunity, since ideally the therapeutic process provides a safe environment in which to open up all emotions and examine them. While I hoped she would make her next appointment, I had a sinking feeling that she would not—that when her therapist slapped her by calling her "him," that was the end.

I wonder how often pronoun mishaps happen in gender therapy. I've had transwomen tell me about former therapists, who didn't specialize in gender issues, who refused to address them by their female names and even insisted on using Mr. I help the battered move beyond these negative experiences. It's my job to help the emerging woman or man cope and move on when strangers and unsupportive relatives and friends are unkind. I assist them with perspective when goofs are made by supportive relatives and friends—gently helping them understand the period of adjustment everybody is going through and the difficulty of reversing a lifetime of referring to a father, son, or brother as he and him.

In gender therapy, more often than not, a transwoman initially presents in guy mode. After the gender shift, I always use her name. In individual sessions, when the person is sitting right in front of me, there is rarely a reason to use a personal pronoun. When family members or important others join us for a

session, their struggle to use the correct gender name and pronoun is often so obvious it makes it easy for me to avoid misspeaking a pronoun.

Actually, this was my second pronoun faux pas. The first occurred more than a year ago at a Halloween party for StarBurst, the Tampa Bay support group I founded in 1988. As an advisor, I attend meetings from time to time, and last year I volunteered to host a game of Halloween Charades.

It was the first time at StarBurst for Gina, an attractive woman who I was seeing in individual therapy. Gina had a defensive posture that I perceived as a vestige of the years she practiced hiding Gina behind Gene.

With both teams close in points, we were in the final round and the game was opened up so both teams had the opportunity to guess. The room was charged with energy and merriment. One of Gina's teammates was acting out the film "Night of The Living Dead." Guesses were coming at me from both sides of the room. Gina, in a voice barely above a whisper, gave the correct answer. I pointed at her and said, "He got it."

If it had been a Hollywood movie, everyone would have gone dead quiet and stopped in mid-motion. In fact, what happened is no one except Gina heard "He got it." Finally I yelled above the crowd, "Gina got it!"

Gina experienced a truly bittersweet moment—crushed by my words, and congratulated by her teammates for winning the game for them. Gina confronted me about it, I listened and we worked through it.

After the unresolved incident with Margaret, I did what I hope every therapist does when something like this happens—I made an appointment to see my therapist.

After the unresolved incident with Margaret, I did what I hope every therapist does when something like this happens—I made an appointment to see my therapist. "Is there something about me and my feelings toward Gina, and now Margaret?" I try to examine all the possibilities. Gina was raised in the same Midwestern city where I grew up, and she is the same age as my younger brother. I spent many years in the same Northeastern city where Margaret grew up, and I finished my education there. Gina and Margaret also share some personality traits—they are bright, generally mistrusting, and have difficulty in relationships.

I tell my therapist that I've abused their trust and feel responsible for their fragility. I'm especially concerned that Margaret will use this as the sign she has been looking for to discontinue her pursuit of her true self, her happy self. I complain that she cannot understand the real significance of this blunder. "And you can?" my therapist asks. I make a weak comparison about how the young people I see talk about their parents and then look at me and go, "Whoops."

My therapist and I talk about everything, and we spar—actually, mostly I spar and she watches. Sometimes she intervenes, sometimes she is patient until I figure out what I need to figure out. She asks if I were hoping for a therapeutic relationship with Margaret like she and I have, like I have developed with Gina.

I probe what I believe is the common link—the masculinity I observed in both these women who were in the early stages of transitioning. I say, "I'm not shifting the responsibility away from me, but I'm certain this was a factor." Finally she gently tells me I need to let this go. I know she is right, but I'm saddened that I have no way to reach out to Margaret, to bring her back into therapy and work this through with her. And I anguish over Margaret and others who are damaged by what may seem a small thing.

This lesson is not just for me—it's for all therapists who work with transgendered individuals and for all society. When will we learn how destructive words can be? In the case of Margaret, the course of her life may hang in the balance—that is the power of one little pronoun.

Note: Margaret (not her real name) has not returned to therapy with Dr. Farrell; Gina (not her real name), continues to see Dr. Farrell and is successfully transitioning.

Kathleen L. Farrell, Ph.D. *is a gender therapist who lives in St. Petersburg, where she works exclusively with individuals who are experiencing gender identity issues and their families and important others.*

Note: For your editor's viewpoint on this topic, turn to page 5.

The Struggle to Find Safe Shelter

Local Efforts Underway to Open Homeless Shelters to Transgender People

by Lisa Mottet
Legislative Lawyer,
Transgender Civil Rights Project
National Gay and Lesbian Task Force

Ann remembers vividly having to stay at a men's shelter in downtown Manhattan. Men would bang on her door. She knew if they got through they would try to kill her again. Staff would rifle through her and other transgender women's belongings and take away their women's clothing. "I don't know what they did with it, threw it away, burned it, whatever. Regardless, we couldn't get it back." Latina and transgender in New York, Ann has been unable to keep a roof over her head by herself for over six years. At her most recent job at a factory, her female boss fired her after a week for something she didn't do, her boss indicating she "didn't want people like you working here."

When I toured a D.C. men's shelter, an old high school gym now filled with a sea of bunk beds, I talked to two young trans women residents. I asked them whether they felt safe from other residents. Their answer: yes, because both had befriended certain men who in turn made sure no one hurt them. They knew other trans women didn't feel safe there, however. Where were those other women? They pulled together money they earned on the streets to pay for the cheapest motel rooms they could find, sometimes staying six to a room.

The showers at this high-school-gym-turned-shelter had no curtains—the only option was showering in the open. I asked one of the young women about this. She said she couldn't shower at the shelter, had to rely on friends' places or go without because she "didn't want to be no Pamela Anderson for the guys."

Ann shares another story that happened to a friend of hers, Sadie, while they were staying at men's shelters in New York. Sadie had breast implants. Male shelter staff thought she was hiding contraband in her chest and violently stripped her, despite her strong protests. She didn't last long in the shelters after that, deciding it was better to try to live off of the street, trying to survive with earnings from sex work.

In December of 2002, a trans woman in Atlanta, Alice Johnston, lost her last place to live after being unemployed since September 11, 2001. She discovered that no women's shelter in the Atlanta area would take her. She took her own life shortly after.

In New York City, it remains the policy that transgender people can access shelter only according to their birth gender. The Department of Homeless Services, which controls access to all of the city's shelters, screens every homeless person looking for shelter in the city and assigns them shelter, and they refuse to assign a transgender person to shelters based on their gender identity.

It's important to note that with the growing number of anti-discrimination laws covering transgender people, shelters are increasingly in violation of law when they fail to house people according to gender identity.

Last year, at a city-run youth foster care facility in New York, a young transgender-identified girl identified as Jean Doe faced repeated discipline for wearing feminine clothing and accessories. With the help of attorney Dean Spade's Sylvia Rivera Law Project, currently housed at the Urban Justice Center, Jean sued and won. The Sylvia Rivera Law Project, which helps low-income trans people, was founded by Spade, a recent graduate of UCLA Law School.

Contrast the problems happening in Atlanta, New York, and the rest of the country to San Francisco and Boston, where people are accepted into shelters based on their gender identity. At Marian Shelter for Women, run by the religiously-affiliated St. Anthony Foundation in San Francisco, transgender women have been welcome and accepted for so long no one is quite sure when the policy changed, exactly—maybe five, maybe seven years ago.

Why the dramatic difference? And what are the policies of shelters in your area? Chances are they aren't good. Whether a person is transsexual, genderqueer, young or old, or on the male-to-female or female-to-male spectrum, homeless shelters are almost universally unsafe for trans people.

Because of the national (actually, international) problems of finding safe shelter, transgender activists and allies are aggressively working to fix this problem. There are many efforts underway, primarily at the local and state levels, to change shelter policies and environments or find other options for trans people.

My organization, the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force, along with the National Coalition for the Homeless, recently completed a publication for use by trans activists and allies trying to make shelters safe for trans people. *Transitioning Our Shelters: A Guide to Making Homeless Shelters Safe for Transgender People* is designed to teach shelter administrators and staff what they need to change about their facility to make it safe. It comes out of efforts in Washington, D.C. to help make the shelters safe for transgender people. The 50+ page guide covers why people should be treated and housed according to their gender identity, bathroom and shower privacy and safety, sleeping arrangements, dress codes, youth issues, clamping down on harassment, dealing with concerns of other residents, intake procedures, making referrals, and model policies. It also provides some transgender basics, such as terminology and an overview of health and identification document issues.

It's important to note that with the growing number of anti-discrimination

Rather than face life in the shelters of Atlanta that would not accept her as a woman, Alice Johnston committed suicide after losing her job and home. Photo: source unknown

laws covering transgender people, shelters are increasingly in violation of law when they fail to house people according to gender identity. Although there has not been a test case anywhere in the country, a fair court should understand this as basic discrimination. These laws can often play a role in convincing homeless shelters to change their policies.

In the Trenches

In New York, efforts are underway to make things better. Spade is in the middle of a campaign to change the Department of Homeless Service's policy. He is working with a women's homeless shelter that is willing to accept transgender women and is trying to convince the Department to assign trans women there in a pilot program. The hope is that the Department will see the pilot program was successful and allow all trans people to be assigned to gender-appropriate housing.

Because of the lack of shelter in New York, other things have happened. For the last 10 years, Rusty Moore and Chelsea Goodwin have provided shelter to dozens of trans people with nowhere else left to go. Transy House, as people affectionately call their home, currently has several people living there. Housing Works, a non-profit organization devoted to finding shelter for those living with HIV/AIDS in New York, just opened their Transgender Transitional Housing facility as well. Because this facility is open only to HIV-positive transgender people and has limited space; it doesn't come close to meeting the need. But it is a start.

In Boston and Massachusetts, things generally look better. TransHealth and Education Development Program, part of JRI Health, has systematically trained shelters all over Massachusetts. JRI Health participated in a task force and committee spearheaded by the Boston Public Health Commission to develop protocols for transgender residents in Boston city shelters. As a result, the current Director of the TransHealth program, Diego Sanchez, spends a lot of time working with and training shelter staff on how to competently serve trans people and working with shelters on a case-by-case basis.

In San Francisco, shelters changed in part because the city passed an anti-discrimination law. The San Francisco Human Rights Commission issued

Dean Spade of the Sylvia Rivera Law Project in New York is fighting to get shelters to accept trans people based on their gender identity. He also represented a young trans woman in a lawsuit against New York City when the city-run facility she was living in repeatedly disciplined her for wearing women's clothing. Photo: Lisa Mattet

guidelines to all entities subject to the law, which included the fact that people are to be treated according to their gender identity. Marcus Arana, an investigator for the Commission, has trained many shelters in San Francisco.

Thankfully, the shelters are complying, making San Francisco one of the safest places to be transgender and homeless.

In Connecticut, the Connecticut Transgender Advocacy Coalition (CTAC) is just beginning its campaign to improve all the shelters in that state. Jerimarie Liesegang explains that CTAC is just finishing a successful campaign to open up all the women's domestic violence shelters in the state to transgender women and are now tackling the homeless shelters, armed with *Transitioning Our Shelters*. By working through the state's homeless coalition, they are taking a very systematic approach—determined to leave no shelter behind.

Diego Sanchez, as part of the TransHealth and Education Development Program at JRI Health in Boston, has trained shelters across Massachusetts on how to treat transgender residents competently. Photo: source unknown

In Toronto, there is a trail-blazing program called the Trans Communities Shelter Access Project of the 519 Church Street Community Centre (an LGBT community center). The Project has trained many shelters in Toronto and has posted much of its material online www.the519.org so others may replicate it in their local efforts.

In Atlanta, Monica Helms and Trans=Action, the statewide transgender advocacy organization, are also working furiously to try to change the shelters there, ever since the suicide of Alice Johnston. Trans=Action has found a friend in Anita Beatty, who runs the city's largest shelter, and together they are working to solve the pressing problem of trans women in need of safe shelter. Ms. Beatty's shelter has been functioning as the safest place for trans women, despite the fact that it is a men's shelter. These activists were able to persuade the United Way to give motel vouchers to trans people who can't safely stay in shelters, yet these vouchers come with time limits. They still haven't yet been able to convince any of the women's shelters to accept trans women.

In Philadelphia, a Sexual and Gender Minorities subcommittee of the Mayor's Task Force on the Homeless recently formed. Michelle O'Brien, co-chair of the committee, reports they are in the beginning stages of developing a plan that will, hopefully, eventually result in training and policy changes in every shelter in the city.

In Washington, D.C., a group of people got together last year to work with shelters. Earline Budd of Transgender Health Empowerment, GiGi Thomas of Helping Individual Prostitutes Survive, Mark Phemister of the D.C. Transmasculine Society, and myself trained the local coalition of shelters on the challenges trans people without homes were facing in D.C. Out of that training grew requests from specific shelters to be trained. Although in D.C. we've not yet attained the lasting changes we want, many of the shelters are much better than they used to be. Changing the rest of the shelters is a work in progress.

—Continued on page 29

How to Improve Shelters in Your Area: A Plan for Action

There are various ways of going about getting the shelters in your locality to change their policies and create safer shelter for transgender folk. Here is an overview:

- Gather a group of folks together to start exploring how to begin work. This is important because it's a big task and because others will help you through tougher challenges. Here are suggestions for you who may want to join into a committee: formerly or currently homeless trans folks (you may be able to find them at the shelters), gay/lesbian/bisexual allies who may have good relationships with city government officials, and an attorney who can explain legal requirements to shelters. Work to ensure that people of different racial and ethnic backgrounds, different economic privileges, different ages, and different genders (MTF and FTM and genderqueer) are involved. Your committee may end up being your shelter training team, and it's important that training teams reflect the full spectrum of the community.
- Get access to the shelters. There are various ways to make connections with shelters or the shelter system: use city council members with whom you have a relationship to connect you to the city agency that oversees or provides funding to shelters; connect with the city agency itself; go through a city's task force on lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender issues; go through a city's human rights commission; connect with the shelters individually; connect with the coalition of shelters in your city; work through the city's health commission; utilize contacts of local/statewide LGBT rights groups; volunteer with a shelter to make a connection and, later, offer to help them with their policy.
- Develop a respectful, not antagonistic, partnership/relationship with individual shelters or the shelter system. Shelter administrators are typically well-intentioned and want to do the right thing, and often don't know their current policies are hurtful. Many shelter administrators work for low salaries and in poor conditions because they feel deeply that no person should have to go without safe shelter. It's important for them to feel that you don't think they are bad people because their policies are inadequate. Acknowledge that their hearts are in the right place and their failures are due simply to not knowing any better and not having resources to figure it out by themselves.
- Educate yourself about the issue of transgender people's problems in shelters, specific to your city if you can. Although *Transitioning Our Shelters* is a useful overview, it will help to get more specific information. Shelters should be toured so you will understand the setup and the conditions that exist for each facility. Tracking down currently or formerly homeless people to talk about the issues they faced in your city's shelters is critical, and their observations and priorities for what needs to be fixed need to be integrated into your recommendations. Invite them to be a part of your group. Also, by touring facilities, you can better provide concrete recommendations. For example, in women's shelters, most often there is complete privacy in bathrooms and showers; you can use that fact to help a shelter understand that it doesn't need to worry about privacy or safety because residents are never unclothed around each other.
- Meet with the shelter's administrators and staff to develop a plan. Hopefully a shelter will assign staff to work with you to analyze the shelter and what needs to change physically (locks, curtains, putting up a welcome sign for trans people), what policy changes are necessary, and what transgender sensitivity training will need to occur for staff and/or residents.
- Develop, tailor, and conduct training for shelter staff/residents. It's important to have a diverse training team. Ideally, you will have formerly or currently homeless transgender people as part of the team. Trainees will understand the issues faced by transgender homeless people a lot better if they hear the story from the person who experienced it herself. The ability to connect with the audience will be hampered, if, for example, an all-white training team is presenting to a staff comprised primarily of people of color. Transgender training should include trans women, trans men, and genderqueer people so participants will understand the full range of people affected by their policies. Lastly, think about including an ally, possibly an allied attorney, who can explain legal aspects and teach the participants how to understand these issues as a non-transgender person.
- Help shelters make the physical changes necessary at their facility. If they need a sign for their lobby, make it for them. If they need locks on their bathrooms or curtains in their showers but have a tight budget, give them the money (do a fundraiser, if necessary), and see if they need you to perform or pay for the installation.
- Help shelters develop written policies/procedures. This prevents change from being temporary, when training is forgotten or staff has turned over.
- Help overhaul the shelter's referral lists. Add transgender-specific referrals and offer yourself or your group as a continuing resource. Offer to be on call for future assistance and trainings.

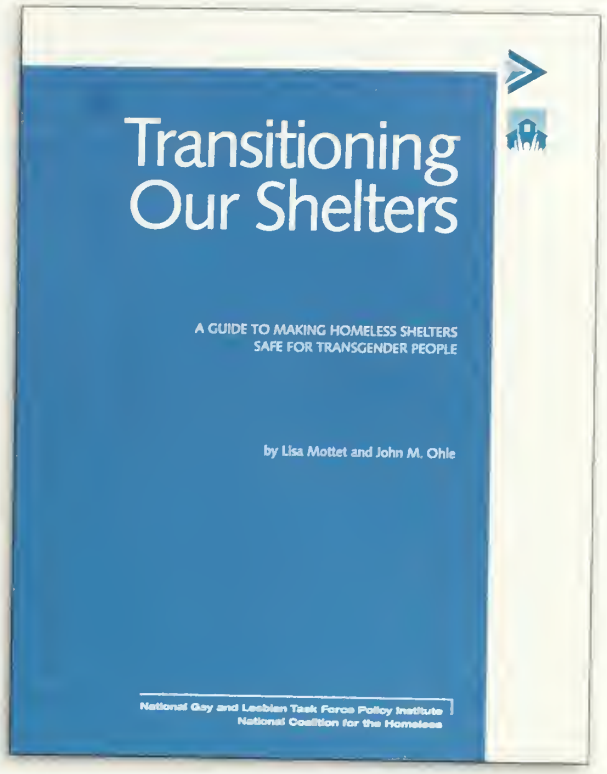
In the trainings, it was important to have GiGi Thomas and Earline Budd talk about their personal experiences with homelessness. Budd talked about how terrible and unsafe shelter conditions made her decide that engaging in unsafe sex for pay was a better way to achieve housing. As a direct result, she lives today with HIV. GiGi Thomas, a client advocate for Helping Individual Prostitutes Survive, helps trans women on a daily basis to stay safe while they are engaging in sex work and helps connect them to services in an effort to help them off the street. The choice for women on the street is stark—there are no safe options and almost no way out.

Last fall, the National Coalition for the Homeless, of which ally Anita Beatty from Atlanta serves on the board, passed a non-discrimination resolution including transgender people. It specifically noted that people are to be housed and provided services according to the gender they self-identify as. This paved the way for their collaboration with the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force on the *Transitioning Our Shelters* Guide.

This is just a sampling of what is going on around the country. What remarkable progress has been made in the last few years! Just four years ago, most of these efforts were not even underway.

Working to make shelters safe actually saves lives. If you are working on this, you already know how inspiring it is to really make a difference. I hope the stories here will inspire more in our community to tackle this problem, throughout the U.S. and around the world. Meaningful change can be made. We can learn from each other's experiences, and collectively, we are changing the world.

Residents of Transy House, which is owned by Chelseo Goodwin (bottom) and Rusty Moore. Photo: Rusty Moe Moore



This Guide for homeless shelters, released in December by the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force and the National Coalition for the Homeless, covers issues such as appropriate housing accommodations, how to create more privacy and safety in restrooms and showers, how to address harassment, and how to create a safe and welcoming environment for transgender residents. It is available as a free download from: www.thetaskforce.org or www.nationalhomeless.org. Hard copies may be acquired by emailing Lisa Mottet at lmottet@thetaskforce.org or calling (202) 393-5177.

Lisa Mottet receives an award from Earline Budd of Transgender Health Empowerment for her work in helping to make homeless shelters safer for transgender people in D.C. Photo: Mara Keisling

Our Accelerating Civil Rights Movement

by Lisa Mottet

We now have four states ...and more than 60 cities and counties with transgender protections clearly written into the law.

It has been an amazing two years in transgender civil rights! At the beginning of 2002, only 6.5% of the country (by population) was covered by anti-discrimination law with language clearly covering the transgender community. Two years later, we find ourselves with more than 24% of the country covered. Wow!

We now have four states (California, New Mexico, Minnesota, and Rhode Island) and more than 60 cities and counties with transgender protections clearly written into the law.

Will 2004 result in another doubling of the number of people covered by anti-discrimination law? Unlikely. Sexual orientation protections cover about 45% of the country, and it doesn't seem likely we will surpass them anytime soon. No matter, many activists are working all over the country, and we're going to come much closer to catching up.

What happened in 2002 and 2003?

Before 2002, the highest number of laws our movement passed in one year was six. In 2002 alone, fifteen local anti-discrimination laws passed! In 2003, thirteen laws passed (eleven local, two statewide). And there may be more that weren't reported.

No one is quite sure why our efforts to pass legislation all of a sudden took off in 2002 and 2003. Certainly, momentum is running in our favor—as more and more cities and states pass laws, it gets easier. It was easier to argue in San Diego for passing a law when Boston, Philadelphia, New York City, and Chicago had already done it the year before. And each local law makes it easier to pass a state law. I feel very fortunate that I get to be involved in so many of these legislative battles.

Because I'm lucky enough to work on this from the national level, I have noticed some interesting trends.

It's playing well in Peoria

In 2003, Peoria became the ninth jurisdiction in Illinois to pass a trans-inclusive law. One of the most amazing aspects to these laws is that they are passing in unexpected places. Covington, Kentucky passed a law this year. El Paso, Texas did as well. Erie County, Allentown, and Scranton, Pennsylvania all passed laws in the last two years.

Lop-sided votes, in our favor

Another exciting fact is about margins by which we are winning votes. 2002 was impressive; more than half the time there were either zero or only one no votes. If you add up all the yeas and nays for 2002, the collective vote is 207 yes and 28 no. That's one comfortable margin!

In 2003, it gets even better. Eight of the eleven local laws passing passed unanimously! That includes Covington, Kentucky, with a vote of 5-0. The collective vote for 2003 (excluding statewide bills) was 78 yeas and 5 nays. Those voting no might be starting to feel lonely.

Large cities are signing on fast

This trend is less surprising. Many of the larger cities have liberal reputations, and it surprises few when they finally pass trans protections. Many of the victories in the last two years have been large cities adding transgender-protections to laws that had sexual orientation in them for many years before. Examples include Baltimore (sexual orientation since 1988); Boston (since 1984); Chicago (since 1988); Philadelphia (since 1982), New York City (since 1986); and San Diego (since 1990). At this point, the three most populous cities in the U.S. are covered by a law. Six of the top ten have coverage, and 13 of the top 25. Eight of these 13 were passed in the last two years. The largest cities without laws are Houston (#4), Phoenix (#6), San Antonio (#9), and Detroit (#10).

Half transgender-only, half transgender-inclusive sexual orientation efforts

About half of the laws passed in the last two years added gender identity or expression at the same time as sexual orientation and about half were adding gender identity/expression to already existing laws. For both types of efforts, there are several instances where the drive for passage of the law was led by gay activists, not transgender activists. While most efforts to add gender identity or expression were led by transgender activists, nearly all relied heavily on the connections and influence of the larger lesbian, gay, and bisexual community. The commitment of gay allies to passage of trans legislation is dramatically increasing each year. Unlike years past, transgender-

inclusive laws were much more common than those that passed with sexual orientation only.

Other victories

Not all legislative and anti-discrimination victories took the shape of anti-discrimination bills. In the last two years, we have gone from four transgender-inclusive statewide hate crimes laws to seven. New Mexico and Pennsylvania passed sexual orientation and gender identity/expression protections simultaneously, while Hawai`i added gender identity/expression protections to an already existing law. Pennsylvania's law passed despite seemingly unfavorable conditions; the state had at the time a Republican-controlled House and Senate and a Republican governor. The seven states that currently have trans-inclusive hate crimes law are California, Hawai`i, New Mexico, Minnesota, Missouri, Pennsylvania, and Vermont.

New Jersey passed a safe schools bill in 2002. This is particularly uplifting because the bill, as originally introduced, didn't include gender identity or expression. The Gender Rights Advocacy Association of New Jersey decided to make changing that bill its first legislative project. After some targeted lobbying and gathering of support of allied groups, the sponsors of the bill amended the bill in both the Senate and Assembly education committees. The bill passed 74-0 in the Assembly and 38-0 in the Senate and became law in September of 2002. A unanimous vote!

With all the success on local and state levels, one might wonder whether these successes will affect our chances for passing a law on the federal level.

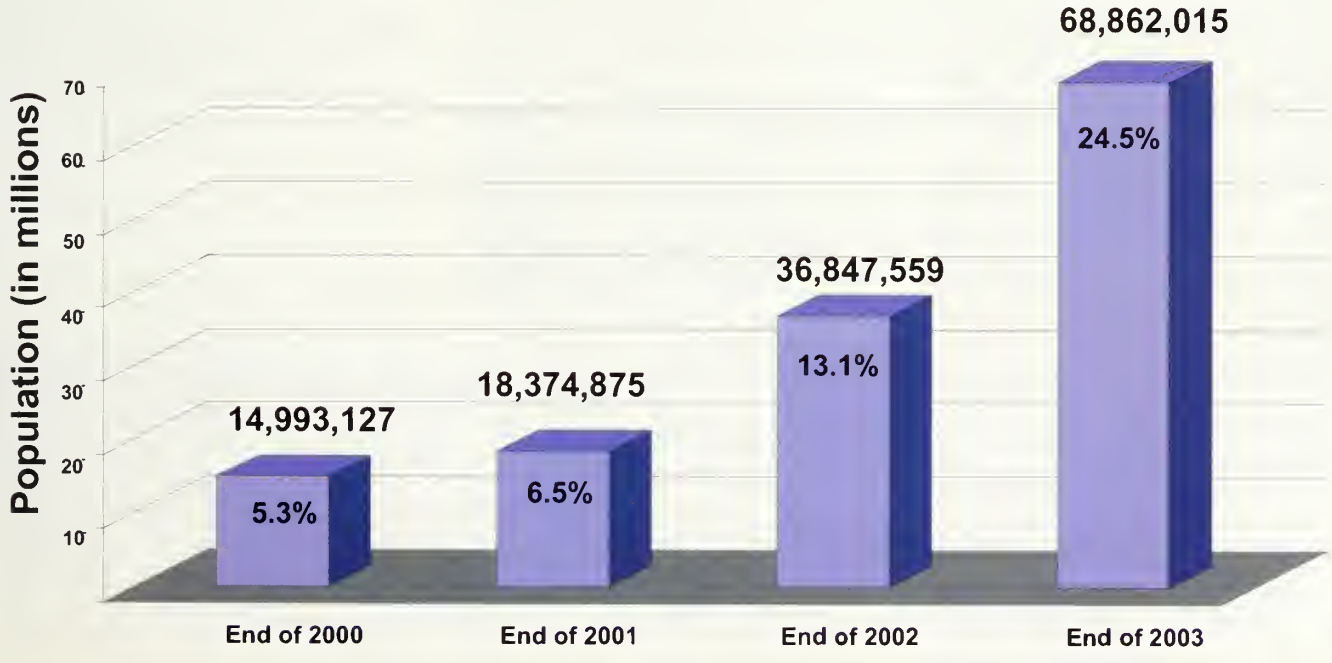
Governors in two states signed executive orders protecting transgendered people in 2003. Outgoing Governor Paul Patton of Kentucky signed an order protecting both sexual orientation and gender identity. In Pennsylvania, newly-elected Governor Ed Rendell signed an executive order specifically adding gender identity or expression to the already existing protections of sexual orientation and other characteristics. We would have three states with this coverage; however Iowa's inclusive executive order, signed several years ago by Tom Vilsack, was challenged in a court case as beyond the governor's authority and is no longer in effect.

What's in store for 2004?

Efforts are starting and continuing in many places. Although the backlash against same-sex marriage is draining many of the resources of the LGBT community, some efforts are still forging ahead. On the state level, there are some good prospects. With strong support of Governor Blagojevich, leaders in Illinois are hopeful they may join the list of states with both sexual orientation and gender identity protections this year. Washington State's bill to protect all lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender people from discrimination finally passed the state House last year, and activists hope it may get through the Senate this year. In New Jersey, the Gender Rights Advocacy Association of New Jersey is considering introducing a bill to add gender identity or expression to the state's Law Against Discrimination. Transgender leaders

Currently, 24% of the U.S. population* lives in a jurisdiction with explicitly transgender-inclusive anti-discrimination laws

*Population data is from the 2000 U.S. Census. Total U.S. Population: 281,421,906



Paisley Currah (left) advocated for the passage of the New York City legislation, shown with lesbian New York City Councilwoman Margarita Lopez who sponsored and pushed for the legislation. Photo: Rusty Mae Moore

Lisa Mottet and Donna Cartwright, member of the Gender Rights Advocacy Association of New Jersey, participate in a transgender town meeting in Princeton, where amending the NJ Law Against Discrimination to explicitly cover trans people was discussed. Photo: Rebecca Juro

Marcus Ionnozzi testifies before the Philadelphia City Council on the discrimination faced by trans men. Photo: Kathy Padilla

from Connecticut are hoping the bill to add gender identity or expression to the hate crimes law will get out of committee and possibly pass this year.

On the local level, efforts are underway to pass transgender-specific or inclusive protections in Athens-Clarke County, GA; Austin, TX; Berkeley, CA; Beaverton, OR; Louisville, KY (required to re-pass their law by a merged county-city government structure); Miami Beach, FL; Salt Lake City, UT; and other places.

Are Federal protections on the horizon?

With all the success on local and state levels, one might wonder whether these successes will affect our chances for passing a law on the federal level. For years, the transgender community has tried to revise the Employment Non-Discrimination Act, which, if passed as is, would cover only sexual orientation discrimination. That bill has been reintroduced every two years since it was introduced in Congress's 1993-1994 Session.

Hope for changing that bill has increased over the last few years as more states have passed laws. We now have four states with explicit protections for trans people. Our 24% of the country being covered is getting a lot closer to sexual orientation's 45% coverage. Yet, we are still behind the number of states that have sexual orientation protections (14 total), and that continues to pose a problem. There is a pressing need for states that have passed sexual orientation to add gender identity/expression protections.

Having more states with explicit protections is very important on the federal level because the main resistance of the sponsors of ENDA to changing the language seems to be their political, not substantive, concerns. The fact that the transgender movement is 10 states behind the gay movement is used as proof that transgender rights are not as politically feasible. Where there is no state law, each city that has sexual orientation but not gender identity or expression is also considered proof of political infeasibility. Working to change these laws at the local and state level has an enormous federal impact.

Some gay and transgender activists are unsure whether or not adding gender identity/expression is important in their state because their state has a good court decision or decision by state enforcement agency that says that gender/sex and/or disability protections cover transgender people in that state. This includes Connecticut, Hawai'i, Massachusetts, New Jersey, and New York. There are good reasons to pass laws in these states anyway.

The first reason I believe it's important to codify those decisions by adding explicit coverage in the law is that clear language in the law should increase compliance of employers and other entities subject to the law in that state. Employers probably don't know these good decisions exist and most likely believe they are free to discriminate because they don't do detailed legal research on what "sex" has been interpreted to mean. If a law were to be passed to make transgender protections clear, an employer would be able to simply look at the law or brochures and posters about the law's coverage and know that anti-transgender discrimination is prohibited for sure.

The more these laws pass, the more good people of this country will realize discrimination is morally wrong.

The second reason it's important to pass these laws in all of the 10 states is that it really will affect whether the federal bill will include transgender people.

Almost every single national LGBT rights organization worked together in 2003 to try to convince the sponsors to change the bill before its introduction for the 2003-2004 Session. This includes the Human Rights Campaign, which in previous years didn't advocate for the bill language to change. Ultimately, the sponsors said no and the bill was introduced without trans-inclusive language in October 2003. The fight over transgender inclusion delayed the bill's introduction, which typically would have happened much closer to January. We're stuck with this non-inclusive bill through the rest of this Congressional session, which will end in December of 2004.

In 2005, however, the push will happen again. Transgender activists are pushing national LGBT rights organiza-

tions to accept only a transgender-inclusive ENDA and to refuse to support ENDA without transgender protections. Last year, about half the national LGBT rights organizations took this position. Taking the no-compromise position will be critical to changing the fate of the bill in 2005.

Winning the culture war

Ultimately, we are all in a battle to change the culture of the United States and the world to accept and honor all transgender people. Certainly, fighting for legislative change is one important tactic. The more these laws pass, the more good people of this country will realize discrimination is morally wrong. However, there are so many other ways to be a transgender activist or ally. Educational work and helping to cause policy change with colleges, high schools, religious communities, health professionals, community groups, homeless shelters and other social service agencies is important work. So is being a part of support networks in your community and giving individuals hope and guidance. Together, we are all making the world a better place for us and those who come after us.

Lisa Mottet *serves as the Legislative Lawyer for the Transgender Civil Rights Project of the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force. She provides assistance to activists working to pass local, state, and federal anti-discrimination legislation that protects people based on gender identity or expression. To receive assistance from the Transgender Civil Rights Project of the Task Force, email Lisa Mottet at: lmottet@thetaskforce.org or call: (202) 639-6308.*

Cole Thaler and Gunner Scott of the Massachusetts Transgender Political Coalition are shown here after receiving an award for their work to pass a law in Boston that added gender identity or expression and included a clause that gave rights to bathrooms use based on a person's gender identity.
Photo: Arlene Fredricks

Phyllis Frye and Mara Keisling, founding executive director of the National Center for Transgender Equality, are two of the national transgender activists pressing LGBT rights organizations to support ENDA only if it is transgender-inclusive.
Photo: Karen Doering

San Diego Council Member Toni Atkins, who sponsored the bill to add transgender protections to the city law; transgender activist Amanda Watson, co-chair of the Human Dignity Ordinance Coalition; and gay activist Jess Durfee, President of the San Diego Democratic Club, who together led the fight to pass the bill.
Photo: J. Boldi, Down Media, Inc.

25 Most Populous U.S. Cities

Cities with Anti-Discrimination Protections for Transgender People in **Bold**

1. New York, NY	6. Phoenix, AZ	**11. San Jose, CA***	16. Austin, TX	**21. Washington, D.C.****
2. Los Angeles, CA	**7. San Diego, CA**	12. Indianapolis, IN	**17. Baltimore, MD**	22. Nashville, TN
3. Chicago, IL	**8. Dallas, TX**	**13. San Francisco, CA**	18. Memphis, TN	**23. El Paso, TX**
4. Houston, TX	9. San Antonio, TX	14. Jacksonville, FL	19. Milwaukee, WI	**24. Seattle, WA**
5. Philadelphia, PA	10. Detroit, MI	15. Columbus, OH	**20. Boston, MA**	**25. Denver, CO**

**San Jose is covered by the CA's statewide law that passed in 2003. ** Washington, D.C. has a federal court interpretation providing coverage.*

Any Which Way They Can

by Alison Kemp
Photos by Özlem Atasoy

It's midnight and Ayten's red glossy lips and long black hair make him shimmer in the darkness. He's not had the operation, so he's still got his penis and sees no need to get rid of it. He's just left a regular customer, a married man with children who is so enamored of his sexual forays with Ayten that he wants to give it all up, wear a dress and join his lover on the street.

Men dressed as women for the sexual pleasure of other men is not new in Turkey. The Kocheks of the Ottoman era set a precedent when they donned skirts and danced for all-male audiences, who, according to contemporary literature, were aroused by their sexual allure. However, not until now have men in dresses been so visible in Turkey. According to Demet Demir, a human rights activist and transsexual prostitute, Turkey's economic crisis of 2000 left nearly a third of the nation on the poverty line. "And it was right after that the number of transgender prostitutes shot up. Now there are around 3000 in Turkey, but about 70% of these aren't transgender. In fact, they aren't even transvestite. They're just gay men." So existing terms won't suffice; only the term trans can possibly come near to defining this ambiguous group.

Ayten's lover is just one of many prostitutes I interviewed in Turkey who identified homosexuality with a state of transness. Twenty-one-year-old Günberi has been on the street for about three years. Bullied at high school for being gay, he left school, bought himself some women's clothes, and turned to prostitution. His boyfriend, who works as a university administrator during the day, moonlights with Günberi.

Sahika Yuksel, a leading psychiatrist in Istanbul who works with pre-operative transsexuals, backs up Demet's claim by adding that there is an increased number of trans prostitutes who choose to keep their penises. She explains that Turkey has a large amount of transvestic homosexuals. "It's an artificial category—they don't dress as women for the same reasons as transvestites do in Europe, so they're not really transvestites, but it's the best description we have here for a very Turkish condition."

Günberi

Demet talks of a hidden identity amongst these prostitutes: being gay is so shameful in Turkey that they find it more acceptable to take on a female appearance. By misappropriating their sexuality, these men further marginalize themselves from society. Some even save enough money to have illegal sex changes, assuming they are transgendered, only to regret them later. Sami Gunesh, a police manager of the Central Istanbul Police Headquarters, recently surprised the media by submitting a survey of transsexual prostitutes for his Master's program. Of the sample of 70 he questioned, just half attended school through age 11; the highest proportion came from Turkey's Eastern cities, steeped in patriarchal tradition.

The macho culture ensures that men are forced to cloak their homosexuality and experience self-denial and alienation as a result. Ayip, the concept of shame, keeps socially unacceptable behavior or talk under wraps. It's a strong force in Turkey, often compounding ignorance and repressing sexual and gender identity. Gay men then run to the comparatively permissive streets of Istanbul, where their lack of education restricts any opportunity in a city of 15 million.

Even if a man is clinically transgendered, most prefer not to "waste" the required minimum two-year assessment period and have the operation done as soon as possible. This means having it done illegally, which can create embarrassing problems with bureaucracy. Turks have to carry an identity card with them at all times: simply opening a bank account requires the display of an ID. Unless the operation has been done legally—that is, after extensive assessment by Sahika and other requirements, a post-operative transsexual's ID card will still indicate male, leaving her open to the scrutiny of indiscreet bank clerks or the myriad of organizations that keep the red tape across the line in Turkey and keep transsexuals without money, on the outskirts of society.

For those who aren't post-operative, there's no chance of finding work in brothels, which are now all full. Günberi used to work in one before taking to the street, "But it was illegal and we were always expecting a police raid. In the end, it got closed down. They won't give licenses for new brothels." And if they did, Günberi, who has no intention of having sex reassignment surgery, wouldn't be able to work in one anyway. Ankara, Izmir, and Istanbul are the only places which can legally establish brothels, accounting for the increased presence of prostitutes in these cities. In the clubs, it's difficult to tell who's paying who—young rent boys hang around the trans prostitutes, each fishing for a good price off the other. "There's too much competition in the clubs now," says Demet, who, being modest and soft-spoken, probably finds the scene too brash. "Besides, before you earn, you've got to spend money on drinks." So, like most of Istanbul's trans prostitutes, she walks the streets, where one can carry flick knives and sprays to protect oneself.

In 2000, the media televised a controversial video that rocked the police force in Turkey. It showed the then head of Central Istanbul Police Force, Suleyman Ulusoy, beating trans prostitutes in custody with a hose pipe. It turned out he had been maltreating them for 13 years. He was sacked and given a 21-year prison sentence. Although this sentence was suspended, it seems to have blown a new attitude through sections of the police force. No one could have imagined

that a high-ranking police officer like Sami Gunesh would be doing a survey on trans prostitutes.

But why this particular group of people? "Because in our police division, we deal with this kind of crime [soliciting] to such an extent that I felt it was a duty to understand more about where these people come from and how they live." Demet talks of transsexuals getting killed in car chases with the police in certain parts of town. "The police have backed off in the last two years, which has really minimized the danger for us now."

It's inevitable that when asked about police violence towards prostitutes, Sami should vociferously deny abuse. "Remember, when we've arrested them, they're usually all fired up on a mix of antidepressants and alcohol."

In custody, many prostitutes start slashing their forearms with razors. Günberi shows me the red tracks that scar his forearm. "The police want to hurt us, so we hurt ourselves." To the cynical eye, there might be something masochistic about this. Slashing rarely abates police anger when hysterical transsexuals are dragged in screaming and shouting, and the prostitutes themselves must know it. It allows them to wear their suffering. It can be related to an extreme version of the shirt-tugging and chest-beating that is part of a way of grieving amongst the more traditional sections of Turkish society. Esmeray, however, links it only to fear. "Sometimes it helps," explains Esmeray, "but most of the time it doesn't, so we start smashing windows and things like that! I know, it's difficult to understand," he laughs. "But you know, we're scared. We get attacked by both gangs and police, so of course we have to protect ourselves. Unfortunately, violence breeds violence."

Another way they protect themselves and each other is by speaking a secret language with a vocabulary of about 200 words, based on Romany. By coding their communication in front of clients, prostitutes can avoid trouble.

In the past few years, not only the number and sexuality of the prostitutes has changed, but more recently, they have started to steal from their clients. "If they don't steal," explains Demet, "other prostitutes will just ask them why they didn't. In the past, transgender prostitutes were much more honorable."

In 2000, the media televised a controversial video that rocked the police force in Turkey. It showed the then head of Central Istanbul Police Force, Suleyman Ulusoy, beating trans prostitutes in custody with a hose pipe.

After they've robbed their clients, she explains, they change wigs as soon as they're back on the street, so they can't be recognized so easily. Demet, who was the only transgendered candidate for a political party in Turkey, blames social degeneration and capitalism. "Everyone's on the make. We have to pay twice as much rent as everyone else, as well as protection money to police and gangs."

Demet and Esmeray, who now devotes herself to a feminist organization, are rare examples of politicized trans people who are trying to motivate others to stand up for their rights. Most, though, are indifferent to such efforts, possibly colored by the fatalism that underpins many aspects of the Turkish attitude to a life so controlled by the hand of authority and the inequalities that it brings. "So, what can I do?" is the often-heard phrase amongst prostitutes to whom options of education and profession are closed.

Demet

Those who earn well see no need for political activism. Ayten earns more money as a prostitute than he would using his degree as a Graphic Designer from Izmir University. He's his own boss and has just bought a flat uptown, unlike his university friends, who are struggling to earn a living or trying to find work.

As for their clients, why do they prefer the trans sex workers to non-trans women? Esmeray explains. "It's a very macho culture, like Brazil for example, and with us, men can express the more feminine side of their sexuality."

Ayten's customer, the married family man, and Günberi's boyfriend are examples of the other side of the hidden identity Demet mentions. They associate homosexuality with being women. It's also a matter of simple opportunism: men will get it where they can find it, and without the right job or background, their chances of finding a girl are limited in a society that places so much emphasis on class. A woman is just as likely to get picked up by a man in the clubs frequented by the transgendered customers, rent boys and their customers.

There's a charming saying which might sound similar to some idioms in the Middle East: any hole will do. Vulgar, maybe, but if you're earning a scrappy wage by serving soup in a canteen during the day and all the women you have contact with are in your family, you get it where you can find it. It's likely that those that earn less also come from more traditional backgrounds, where a woman should be a virgin when she marries, but the boy she's dating is never vetted as scrupulously.

Due to a lack of religious zealotry, the public in Istanbul is generally indifferent to the rise in transsexual prostitution. In less traditional parts of Istanbul, the transgendered would usually deal with looks of fascination or derision, but outside these areas and away from the streets frequented by the prostitutes, they are vulnerable to abuse and harassment. Demet remarks, "These people who curse us during the day give money to lie with us at night."

Prostitution has saved many trans people from poverty, but it seems at first like a Faustian bargain: they're earning the money, but their ignorance leads

Esmeray

them to follow masochistic behavior—the self-mutilation with razors, the sex changes, and simply alienating themselves from the mainstream by identifying their homosexuality with transvestitism or being transgendered. Society is complicit in maintaining the pretense of normative values. As long as this is the case, public health concerns such as AIDS will be mainly governed by the philosophy that translates as "It's not worth depriving oneself of something one likes for fear of bad consequences." On the other hand, millions of Turks work for a paltry wage that doesn't pay the rent, for bosses who completely neglect any employee rights.

In many ways, the lifestyle of these trans prostitutes has certain advantages: they can be true to their sexuality, if not their gender, and they have the support of a like-minded community and a certain amount of autonomy in their work.

A more inclusive society would be the ideal, but that would mean suspending long-held beliefs about what makes a man a man and a woman a woman. Although ideas are gradually shifting, it's not likely to make a tangible difference to anyone for a long time to come.

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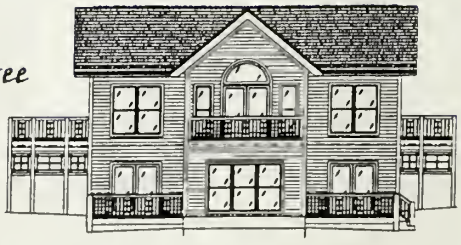

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Marci L. Bowers, MD

Dr. Marci Bowers has been performing solo SRS procedures in Trinidad CO since July 2003. Following her six-month surgical apprenticeship with pioneer Dr. Stanley Biber, she has launched her solo career as one of the most exciting new faces in the field of transgender surgery, having performed more than 40 such procedures and counting....

With her 17 years of experience as a Gynecologic Surgeon, a dedication to improving the state-of-the-art in terms of post-operative functionality and aesthetics, and the empathy and sensitivity that she brings to her work as a woman and a member of the community, she is truly "...the future of transgender surgery" as Dr. Douglas Osterhout has commented.

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Dr. Marci Bowers has been appearing at Transgender Conferences and Events nationwide. Look for her at:

- **IFGE Convention (April 2004)**
- **Esprit Gala – Washington State (May 2004)**
- **Southern Comfort (September 2004)**

"The Sex Change Capital of the World" highlighting Dr. Bowers' move to Trinidad was broadcast on TLC in Nov 2003 and Feb 2004. Look for it to be shown again soon in its entirety – check with Dr. Bowers website for schedule updates and latest news!

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Marci L. Bowers, M.D.

either or

by julia serano

it should have been no big deal really
just another saturday night in some bar
some guy flirting with some girl
and she wasn't even interested in him
and it should have been no big deal

except that i was the girl
and the guy was the first straight boy
who ever took an interest in me
in the past
other men had hit on me
but only the ones who like their girls
to be boy underneath
but months of hormone replacement therapy
erased most traces of my maleness
so much so that this straight boy
didn't think twice before flirting with me

and it took me by surprise
we talked for a while
before he gently touched the side of my arm
and smiled
and my brain went wild
with a million thoughts
set off like fireworks
like my life flashing before my eyes
years of potions and spells
crossdressing rituals
designed to conjure up the girl in me
just so i could catch a glimpse of her reflection
in a bathroom mirror
or store front window

and i wasn't even into this boy
but he made me blush
his flirts felt like hard won accomplishments
years of suffering and sacrifice all paid off
all because some random guy saw a real girl
when he looked into my eyes

our language doesn't have the words to describe it
this is the sort of thing that ordinarily gets taken for granted
from the moment the doctor announces
"it's a girl" or "it's a boy"
most people's gender is written in granite
but my gender
is more like a carrot on a stick
it's always dangling right in front of me

because i may pass as a woman
but i have a male past
that runs thirty-some years deep
and it's full
of memories that i don't regret
secrets that i shouldn't have to keep
and every time i meet
a stranger who turns into a friend
it's only a matter of time
before i find myself telling them
and i've seen that look hundred of times
when what i am changes in someone else's eyes
and they always act nonchalant and polite
but from that point on
they can't help but see the boy in me
and i'm no longer quite the girl i used to be

my gender
is a boulder that i roll up a hill each day
only to have it come crashing back down on me

that's why it's so tempting for me
to just lose myself
in those rare moments
of absolute authenticity
like when that straight boy flirted with me
because a part of me wants so desperately
to be one hundred percent female
yet somehow
the burden of a million sins of omission
seems like too high of a price to pay
for the privilege of merely blending in

i know what the real problem is
gender is exclusive
it's always either or
and i guess that makes my gender
none of the above
because my gender
is the answer to a trick question
it's like that optical illusion where you see
either a vase
or two faces
but you can't see them both at once
my gender
is more than the sum of my anatomical parts
and you can insist on seeing me
as either female or male
that's up to you to decide
and if you still don't get what i'm trying to say
well that's okay
my gender
takes more than three minutes to describe

Julia Serano is an Oakland-based writer, transsexual, musician, lesbian, scientist, spoken word artist, and loving husband. To find out more about her various creative endeavors, check out her website at www.juliaserano.com

T Girl in a Queer World

by Melissa Clark

Okay, so I've read the biographies, the autobiographies, the novels, and the revelatory nonfiction pieces that define what we are. They tell us that gender and sexual orientation are not necessarily the same thing; in fact, they go way out of their way to emphasize exactly that point. The problem, then, is not in defining our gender or how we feel the need to express it, but rather how expressing our gender impacts the rest of our lives. For example, I'm a transsexual woman, male-to-female, and I've heard a box full of theories on why it is I "chose" to transition. They range from, "Didn't you just want to be with a man?" to "You did this to embarrass us" ("us" being my family of origin, from whom I have not heard a word in nearly a year). The answer to each of those is "No!"—but that hardly addresses the clouded notion of why transpeople do what we do. The National Enquirer's "Inquiring minds want to know" motto may be a bit overrated, but in this case, perhaps it's exactly what needs to be addressed to simply answer the question.

Without sounding like every other attempt to describe one's own situation, my journey began with the difficult attempt to understand why, if I was sexually attracted to women, I felt the need to express myself as a woman. When I finally reached the point in my life where I thought I needed to figure that one out or lose what little sanity I had, I was already struggling with my marriage. Why not? My wife had expected to marry a male and was accustomed to male behavior and simply couldn't understand why I was so different from her expectations. Neither could I, but I had no idea what to expect from a male, either. There were things "guys did." I tried to do those things, enjoy those things, but often felt as baffled as Nathan Lane and Robin Williams did in the scene from "Birdcage," when they were trying to discuss the Dolphins. Yet I understood and actually appreciated the concept of sports. It was the other parts of being a guy and the enjoyment of white male privilege that confused me—for I'd always been a feminist, even before I fully realized why being a feminist made survival sense to me personally, as well as good sense to women in general.

I went to school, as the golfers say, regarding my gender identity. I joined a gender support group and observed the other members. They said they were crossdressers, and that's what I thought I must have been. I tried, even as my marriage was slipping away, to hold on to the masculinity that was supposed to be a part of the crossdressing. What I couldn't grasp, however, was the concept of being a guy who occasionally wore a dress. I felt there was a legitimate part of me that emerged only when I was able to dress. Gradually, however, I found the need to dress less a need than a sometime expression of my inner person.

As my self-confidence grew, I found myself dressing on non-meeting nights and showing up at support group meetings dressed in masculine street clothes. None of this peculiar behavior had any effect on my self-perception, nor did the warnings that the lesbians would not like us were we to go as a group into a gay bar after the meeting. From the beginning, I found the women were receptive in conversations and a bit curious. I suspect they sensed, as I did, an intuitive connection and secure feeling in conversing. As time passed, more women became comfortable with my peculiar situation.

As my self-confidence grew, I found myself dressing on non-meeting nights and showing up at support group meetings dressed in masculine street clothes.

This was not the crossdresser's mantra, "best of both worlds" (and really, for whom would it be the best of both worlds?), where they claim to be feminine enough to be "lesbian" in their sexual encounters, yet masculine enough for their wives to be satisfied by a man. This was the extension of gender identity from my perception of me to others' perception of me. When questioned by a gay man as to why, if I was attracted to women, I was not simply a straight guy, I responded that in that case, why wasn't he simply a straight woman? After some thought, he apologized for having initially missed my point. Not bad, from a gay man's perspective! The flip side of his perception is the stereotypical straight world's perception of male-to-female

transsexuals as gay males who want to be with men but are afraid to admit it. This doesn't really apply to transsexuals, either, because their self-perception puts an entirely different perspective on their sexual orientation, even when pre-op. The only male-to-females who can truly be called gay are those of us who, even while we are leaving our masculine roots behind, are still attracted to women.

The point of this, of course, is not so much how one perceives oneself, but how, once one has embarked upon the road of self-identification, others either accept or reject their gender identity. Crossdressing makes such a reality extremely difficult because it allows the male crossdresser no real time for her feminine persona to develop. In my own situation, the necessity of living and working every day in transition brought about a sink-or-swim situation that was the best thing to happen to me. Fellow workers knew me only as the woman they met the first day at my new job site. My voice was throaty, but they heard what they saw, rather than the still developing feminine voice. Even now, when I go to a LGBT event, the gay men read me with little difficulty. Ironically, I think that's because they base so many of their observations on stereotypes. By that, I mean they eliminate the obvious drag queens and the butch dykes, and look me over, figuring if I'm not a straight woman, I must be a transsexual. The lesbian friends I've made have had more difficulty in clocking me. One woman, a customer where I work, who is herself a lesbian, told me, "I just knew you were family." I smiled and nodded that it was true. If she only knew how true, or how difficult the journey was to become family!

Finally, when the woman I'm currently seeing met me, she saw me as a woman she wanted to meet and know. I felt the same way about her—something I don't do with just anyone. When we had an initial long talk, she asked me if I was as open about being transsexual with everyone as I'd been with her. I told her no, that I brought it up only with those I expected to be with for some time, that I didn't want to create a difficult situation later in the relationship. It had no impact on the relationship we've built, primarily because we've built it on honesty and understanding of ourselves and each other.

My point in this article is although one doesn't need to look to others for verification, others will look to that person to find their inner verification. If a person can express their true inner self to others, others will see it, understand it, and accept it. If the expression is perceived by others as some sort of act, there will be trouble. Use common sense in how you present yourself to others. No one shops for groceries in an evening gown, goes for a walk alone in the middle of the night, or wears more makeup than Bozo the Clown to go out in the afternoon, unless they expect an opposing reaction—neither transwomen nor genetic women. Unless a transperson is an incurable narcissist, there should be consideration of a partner and close friends before embarking on something outrageous. This is why gender identity, although not the same as sexual orientation, is intertwined with it. We must emerge from our minority role into larger worlds, even if they are still minority existences. It's why I've been perceived in my feminine image in a straight world, and have also been able to be a T-girl in a queer world.

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Transgender Spirituality and Activism

by Vanessa Sheridan

It doesn't take a rocket scientist to see that many obstacles confront trans people as we work toward achieving greater acceptance, respect, and legitimate civil and human rights within society. For example, it's a fact that along with gay, lesbian, and bisexual persons, the spiritual lives and concerns of the transgendered have traditionally been relegated to the back burner or, even worse, to the trash heap by most mainstream religious denominations. It's sad to be marginalized by society, but it's even more troubling when it occurs within the paradigm of religion, an institution that is supposedly built around the ideas of love and acceptance.

Various conservative factions operating within organized religion have continually and unfairly rejected those of us with "different" gender and sexual orientations, behaviors, and appearances. That rejection has historically been based upon misunderstanding, fear of the unknown, faulty and/or prejudicial interpretations of scripture, misguided social mores, and inaccurate cultural perceptions/expectations of gender and sexuality.

The radical religious right continues to work vigorously and loudly to deny religious, political, civil, and human rights to GLBT folks through various ongoing and highly insidious campaigns of public misinformation, myths, and lies. We are perceived as "other," and are therefore easily categorized as bad, sinful, evil, sick, or perverted. "The intimidating power of prejudice demands silence and invisibility, the hallmarks of our oppression as transgender people." Stirring up popular opinion against us has unfortunately proven to be a highly effective maneuver, one calculated to increase animosity, prejudice, and persecution toward anyone who doesn't fit the radical right's narrow definition of acceptability. (The parallels to Hitler's successful propaganda campaigns against Jews, Gypsies, gays, and other "non-Aryan" or "subhuman" minorities are striking and extremely relevant.)

Reasons

Addressing these gravely profound injustices from a spiritual perspective is absolutely necessary for all people who care about justice. It's necessary because any movement toward personal freedom and autonomy, human and civil rights, and legitimate legal standing can't be truly effective unless it's firmly grounded in spirituality. (I'm not talking about religion here, *per se*—religion is merely a human invention. I'm talking about spirituality, a recognition of ourselves as spiritual beings who have been lovingly and wonderfully created as such, and who are capable of transcendent thought, word, and action.) Can you imagine Jesus, Mahatma Gandhi, Joan of Arc, Martin Luther King, Jr., Desmond Tutu, Mother Teresa, or Nelson Mandela without a deep spiritual foundation from which they could draw strength, wisdom, conviction, motivation, direction, and guidance? Surely they wouldn't have gotten very far if they had ignored or trivialized the spiritual component of their efforts.

Of course, some of us simply don't understand or appreciate the reasons for becoming involved in politics or social activism. Such folks consider activism to be a nuisance, confusing, overwhelming, beyond their capacity, too time-consuming, or just too much trouble. It's been my observation that until one's life is directly affected by some particular outside force such as oppression in various forms, a person has relatively little motivation to become socially or politically involved. Trans people have a long, proud legacy of social and political activism—read Leslie Feinberg's *Transgender Warriors* if you doubt that in the slightest. We can draw upon a remarkable history of incredible courage in the face of systemic oppression.

But Why Me?

"But," you may be asking, "why should I become politically or socially active? I'm no one special—what could I possibly have to offer, and why should I get involved?" Here are just a few reasons:

- Because of Brandon Teena, who was shot to death in a farmhouse in Nebraska.
- Because of Tyra Hunter, the pre-operative transsexual woman who was mocked, laughed at, and denied emergency medical treatment just before her death on a Washington D.C. sidewalk because she still had a penis.
- Because of Dana Rivers, the transsexual teacher who was dismissed from her job simply because of who she is.
- Because in forty-eight states our people can be victims of housing, medical, and employment discrimination, and there are no laws on the books to protect their civil rights.
- Because the unfair, rigid gender expectations of an ignorant culture are causing families to splinter, par-

ents to disown their children, and loving relationships to end.

- Because the climate of intolerance and hatred fostered by the radical religious right has helped to bring about tragically high rates of depression, anxiety disorders, familial alienation, chemical abuse, depression, and suicide among GLBT people.
- Because hate-motivated violence, state-sanctioned rejection, rigid notions of gender identity and gender expression, and the abusive withholding of information from children and youth that they need to understand themselves is the norm rather than the exception in our culture.
- Because many of our beautiful transgendered young people are convinced they'll never be loved or accepted, and because suicide is the leading cause of death among those young people.
- Because if we don't stand up, speak out, and work for justice, the next one to feel the wrath and the power of a bigoted right-wing ideology could very easily be you.

In *Stand and Be Counted*, a book by David Crosby and David Bender, Crosby relates a story told to him by his friend and fellow activist, Harry Belafonte. This is an account of a single event during the civil rights movement of the sixties, and it eloquently illustrates the power of ordinary people coming together in unity to work for a just cause. I'm deeply moved by this story and I want to quote it here:

We did a concert with Dr. (Martin Luther) King at the University of Maryland in their big field house and thousands of people showed up. Dr. King was delivering his speech and there was a redneck sheriff who was part of the state police force there. And when I walked in to the holding area for the artists, I saw him watching us with a scathing look on his face. I saw how unyielding he was. And then at the end of the event, after Dr. King's speech and Mahalia Jackson's magnificent singing, I went back to the holding pen and there was that same sheriff. And he stood, and tears came into his eyes and he started to make a remark and couldn't. He just turned and walked away. The next morning, as we were leaving to go on to our next stop, the attendant at the desk gave me an envelope. And in this envelope, which felt very heavy, there was a note and with the note were six bullets. That same trooper—I still have the letter—wrote this: "I give you the bullets from my weapon because I know they will never be used. I have found a force far greater than any I have ever imagined. What you all did with song and what Dr. King did with words showed me that the gun is not the only way and I will resign from such a role and find something to do with my life that will make a difference." And it showed the wisdom of what Dr. King had always said, "Judge not your enemy even though he may do deeds of evil, for somewhere in him there may be something redemptive. It is up to you to find that redemptive place and bring him to your cause."

"I have found a force far greater than any I have ever imagined..."—just reading that statement gives me gooseflesh. You know very well what force that sheriff was describing: it is the awesome power of love doing justice. That force is stronger than bullets, stronger than the all the money and the power of the radical religious right, stronger than bigotry, stronger than prejudice, stronger than hatred, stronger than the lies of our enemies, and it is what will ultimately allow trans people to win the struggle for civil and human rights that should be ours in the first place.

A long-time feminist axiom says, "The personal is political." This means that anything that affects you personally is going to have political overtones and ramifications of some kind. If you're transgendered, or if you love or care about someone who is transgendered, then you'd better become active and informed or you're in danger of being swept away by the increasingly fervent tide of right-wing religious fanaticism. I don't mean to be an alarmist (I hate it when people run around trying to be Chicken Little) but, as the saying goes, "The only thing necessary for evil to triumph is for good people to do nothing." One thing's for certain: no one ever achieved any rights by standing around and waiting for them to be delivered. Don't fool yourself—our socio-cultural institutions are never going to give us our rights unless we work for them and demand them. If we sit back and do nothing then that's exactly what we'll get: nothing.

Doing Justice

If the transgender community is ever going to achieve the civil/human rights and the justice we deserve, we must understand that we will only do so by operating continuously from a platform

of strong spiritual practice and belief. Please hear this clearly: I'm not at all suggesting that everyone must become a Christian or adopt any specific spiritual belief system. (I'll leave that to the members of the radical religious right, a relatively small but spiritually arrogant and highly vocal faction who successfully have co-opted the name Christian for their own bigoted and exclusive ends.)

However, our transgender spirituality, in whatever positive form we choose, must always be at the core of any social and legal efforts we make on our own behalf. If we don't do that we risk losing the moral center, the very soul, of our movement—and any movement without a soul or a moral center is ultimately doomed to failure because its motivations are flawed. It will rot from within.

The African-American civil rights effort achieved its successes in the sixties because it was firmly entrenched in what was right and good. Its participants were willing to accept the consequences of their actions because they knew their cause was just. Those were some incredibly brave but very frightened people; they stood up to their persecutors and still took action because they knew and believed it was right. *(My definition of real courage is doing what is right even when you're scared to death. Just ask any trans person who comes out for the first time—very few non-GLBT folks can understand or comprehend the awesome bravery that such a step requires.)*

The civil rights movement leaned heavily upon the spiritual roots of the Black church, Black theology, the ideology of nonviolence, and the teachings of Jesus, such as "Love your enemies," "Do good to those who despitefully use you," and "If someone smites you on one cheek, turn to him your other also." *(Of course, Jesus never really gave us instructions on what to do after we run out of cheeks to be smitten. I guess that's still up to us.)* We must learn to adopt similar tactics of love and nonviolence if we are to be successful in achieving our human/civil rights. *(Check out the Rev. Mel White's SoulForce website for more information.)*

In the Name of Love

As much as some might prefer it, we simply can't wait or depend upon our religious institutions to do much for us. Even Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. said, "In spite of the noble affirmations of Christianity, the church has often lagged behind in its concern for social justice and too often has been content to mouth pious irrelevancies and sanctimonious trivialities. It has often been so absorbed in a future good 'over yonder' that it forgot the present evils 'down here.'"

It's easy to hate our enemies. Any fool can do that—the radical religious right does it to us all the time.

Jesus never uttered a word about transgenderism or homosexuality in the scriptures, but He always encouraged others to continue working and struggling for what was right, just, and good. His teachings were about using the ultimate power of love to overcome hatred, and that's exactly what transgendered people need to do if we are to successfully rise above the prejudice, bigotry, and lies of the forces arrayed against us. We will accomplish that goal only by meeting our enemies with love, with a concern for our shared human worth, and with a moral force so powerful that it will eventually force the purveyors of hate to give up and blow away. Remember, nothing—NOTHING—can withstand the power of consistent, ongoing love.

It's easy to hate our enemies. Any fool can do that—the radical religious right does it to us all the time. Dr. King's message reminds us that it takes great strength of character to oppose hatred through loving, peaceful action that leads to justice for all people. It's difficult, but it is the right and only way to achieve our objectives.

We must remember, too, that violence is never the answer. Given enough time, justice in the name of love will always overcome the purveyors of violence and hatred. Crosby and Bender write, "Almost nobody believed that Martin Luther King could effect significant change on civil rights in this country, especially without using violence as part of his strategy. And nobody ever believed that a little man named Gandhi wrapped in a bedsheet would be able to stop the entire British empire in India. Stop it in its tracks, cold." Yet that's exactly what happened because of the power of love doing justice—and that's what can happen for GLBT people, too, if we're strong in our resolve to stand firm and be counted, to stand up for what's right, and to do justice in the name of love.

The Power of Community

We must do this work and embrace this struggle not as individuals but as a community, striving to form strong, effective coalitions with other groups and individuals who care passionately about

justice and about doing what is good. Transgendered people have much more in common with other oppressed groups than we don't: gays, lesbians, bisexuals, people of color, women, the mentally and physically challenged, the poor, the aged, all struggle with issues of marginalization and oppression in various forms. We need to emphasize our similarities even as we celebrate our differences, and we must certainly come together in unity over issues that threaten the peace, freedom, and security of any person or group of good will.

A sense of community is crucial in this struggle, because isolation kills. "Divide and conquer" is an age-old strategy that the radical religious right would love to use against us, and we must not allow such tactics to keep us from forming and maintaining supportive community. None of us can do this by ourselves—we need and have to learn to depend upon each other. Remember, Ben Franklin said, "We must all hang together or we'll all hang separately." Nothing would please the radical religious right more than to see GLBT people completely eliminated from society, so we are challenged to employ the tactics of love, nonviolence, inclusive community, coalition, awareness, and intelligence as we struggle against this threat to our freedoms.

Dietrich Bonhoeffer was a young German Lutheran pastor who was hanged by the Nazis just before the end of World War II. He was a perceived threat to the tyranny of Nazism, just as GLBT people are currently perceived as a threat to the social order by the rightist socio-religious powers-that-be. *(We're dangerous all right, but only insofar as we threaten their theocratic agenda of exclusivity and enforced conformity of thought, behavior, and appearance.)* Before his death, Bonhoeffer spoke these words to his students in the underground resistance seminary: "Evil demands to have a man by himself. It withdraws him from the community. The more isolated a person is, the more destructive will be the power of evil over him, the more disastrous his isolation... Evil shuns the light. In the darkness of the unexpressed it poisons the whole being of a person. This can happen even in the midst of a pious community." Many of our sisters and brothers have learned this, much to their dismay.

The numbers of GLBT persons who are disenchanted and disgusted with their shabby treatment and oppression at the hands of religion and social ultra-conservatism are increasing rapidly. We need to pull together, not pull apart.

And So the Struggle Continues...

In summation, here are some points to remember:

- The radical socio-religious right actively hates GLBT people. It is working overtime to discriminate against and even eliminate us if possible. *(For instance, a little-known but highly influential radical right-wing religious group, the Reconstructionists, led by R. J. Rushdoony, calls for conveniently selective interpretation of various biblical passages, including the death penalty for GLBT persons.)* You owe it to yourself and your community to find out about threats such as this. Don't be unaware of these dangerous and deadly ideologies: check up on them for yourself.
- Political and social activism is always the true calling of people who love justice. Do what you can, where you can, when you can. Every action done for justice, no matter how small, matters significantly.
- Any successful movement toward liberation absolutely must seek and maintain a strong spiritual essence at its core.
- Love is a moral force that can eventually overcome anything, even religious or social persecution. We must be steadfast, remaining non-violent while always retaining our commitment to telling the truth about our lives and doing acts of justice in the name of love.
- We owe it to ourselves and to our transgendered sisters and brothers to form an inclusive, embracing, cohesive, justice-loving community, one that acts in cooperation with others as we struggle toward the goal of achieving religious, political, legal, human and civil rights for all people everywhere.
- We shouldn't be naive about this: things won't change overnight, so we have to commit ourselves to hanging in there and staying for the long haul. We have to be unflaggingly persistent, or our efforts will be in vain; but, if we commit to working unceasingly for justice on behalf of all, we will win. We will win not because we are stronger or richer or have more clout, but because we only want our inalienable human (and not special) rights.

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The Riot at Compton's Cafeteria: Coming Soon to a Theater Near You!

by Tapestry Staff

Almost everybody has heard of Stonewall, the bar in New York's Greenwich Village where drag queens sparked a riot in 1969, and the modern GLBT movement is supposed to have begun. Almost nobody has heard of Compton's Cafeteria, but that's about to change, with the impending release of "Screaming Queens," a new documentary film by transgender scholar Susan Stryker and historian Victor Silverman.

In August 1966, three years before Stonewall, transgendered people banded together and fought back at Compton's against the routine and often violent police harassment they experienced on a daily basis. The riot at Compton's Cafeteria marks the beginning of the transgender struggle for human rights and social dignity.

Amanda St. Jaymes was at Compton's when the riot broke out.

"You know those big round sugar-shakers?" she asks. "Well, they'll go through a plate glass window in nothing flat."

Tamara Ching is equally descriptive of the usefulness of a well-stocked handbag.

"You hit somebody with one of those on the top of their head, not from the side, and you can drop them down cold."

Don't get her started on the street-fighting uses of a high-heeled shoe.

Recovering Transgender History

The story of what happened at Compton's 38 years ago has been recovered over the past few years by Stryker, who until recently worked as the Executive Director of the GLBT Historical Society in San Francisco. She left that job in November to finish work on the film, which features St. Jaymes, Ching, and other interviewees, and fascinating archival footage and still images.

Compton's Cafeteria was located at the corner of Turk and Taylor Streets in San Francisco's seedy inner-city Tenderloin district. Open 24 hours, it was a popular hangout for the neighborhood's scrappy inhabitants, including runaway teenage hustlers and transgendered street prostitutes.

"I was doing some research into the history of gay pride parades, which commemorate the Stonewall riots" says Stryker, "and in the centerfold of the program of the first gay pride march in San Francisco in 1972, I found the story of the riot at Compton's Cafeteria. I was blown away. I mean, here was this document from an event that was supposed to be about Stonewall, but the parade organizers in San Francisco traced the history of their own activism back to another riot, the one at Compton's. You'd think somebody would have noticed this before now."

Transgendered people were at the center of the Compton's Riot, just as they had been central to the events at Stonewall. According to the 1972 parade program, police were making a routine sweep of the Tenderloin and entered Compton's to arrest people suspected of prostitution. One of the transgendered patrons threw a cup of coffee in a cop's face and pandemonium erupted. Plates, trays, cups, and silverware flew through the air. The police and the cafeteria management fled outside and called for reinforcements. Patrons smashed the restaurant's plate glass windows and poured into the street.

Police tried to make arrests, but they met with fierce resistance. A newspaper stand next to the cafeteria was set on fire, and police vehicles were vandalized. According to the 1972 description, "general havoc was raised that night in the Tenderloin."

"As a professional historian specializing in transgender issues, I was stunned that neither I nor anybody else I knew or anything I had ever read mentioned the Compton's Riot," Stryker said. She started digging into archival source material in the GLBT Historical Society's vast holdings, and context of the riot began to emerge.

The Riot in Context

San Francisco's Tenderloin was a neighborhood that had been home for decades to transgendered people who had been denied housing in other parts of the city and who, due to employment discrimination, were often compelled to work in the sex industry to survive. Such people were usually perceived to be on the lowest rung of society, and often suffered abuse from both their customers and the police.

In the mid-1960s, urban renewal was transforming central San Francisco, and most affordable housing in the area was torn down to make way for high-rise office towers, museums, and convention facilities. A wave of new residents flooded into the Tenderloin, displacing transgendered tenants in the neighborhood's already overcrowded residency hotels.

At the same time, anti-prostitution police street sweeps began to intensify, driven largely by the war in Viet Nam. In times of war, it's common for both civilian and military police to crack down on commercial sex in an effort to prevent the spread of sexually transmitted disease among troops heading off to combat.

Unlike in other periods of heightened crackdowns, residents of the Tenderloin started to organize. This was the '60s, after all, and profound changes in American society were underway—the hippie movement, the anti-war movement, the civil rights movement, and a burgeoning sexual liberation movement. The riot at Compton's was part of this broader wave of social change.

For the first time, transgendered people living in trying circumstances started to believe they could change their situation and not merely survive it. Activist ministers from Glide Memorial Methodist Church began working with street youth in the Tenderloin, including many young transgendered people who had left home after their families rejected

them. These young people formed a group called Vanguard, which is both the first known gay youth group and the first transgender group of any kind in the United States. Vanguard worked to improve the conditions in their neighborhood—and the group met at Compton's Cafeteria.

The final piece of the puzzle was the presence of Dr. Harry Benjamin, whose San Francisco offices were located just a few blocks away from the Tenderloin in upscale Union Square. Transgendered people seeking hormones and genital surgery had been flocking to San Francisco to consult with Dr. Benjamin since the 1940s. In July of 1966, a few weeks before the riot, Benjamin had published his famous book *The Transsexual Phenomenon*, which proposed a new medical model for treating transsexuals. At the time, it was virtually impossible for people who desired surgery to obtain the procedures in the United States. That began to change in the summer of 1966; a few months after publication of Benjamin's book, the first "sex-change" clinic in the country opened in Baltimore at Johns Hopkins University.

Transgendered residents of the Tenderloin were aware of this historic shift, and they grasped the possibility of having a better, less marginalized life if they could gain access to the medical procedures that would help them embody their sense of gender in a way other members of their culture could perceive. The moment had arrived for them to resist their mistreatment and to insist on a better quality of life.

The spark that finally ignited the riot at Compton's was a new policy put in place by the restaurant management, who was trying to limit the amount of time patrons could linger over their food and drinks. The cafeteria also instituted a service charge designed to keep out poorer customers. Vanguard considered these changes discriminatory, and they organized a picket line in late July to protest the new management policies.

In this state of heightened tension, what once might have been just another routine police raid became the launching pad for a transgender rights movement that still continues to gain strength.

Making the Film

"Susan and I have been watching films together since our graduate school days at UC Berkeley," recalls Victor Silverman, now an Associate Professor of History at Pomona College, "and we'd often discussed working on a film project together. When she recovered the story of the Compton's Cafeteria Riot, we knew we'd found our subject."

In spite of the surprising amount of visual documentation the two historians were able to find, the real stars of the film are the interviewees.

"At first we thought we would need to make this film as a kind of detective story, a story about a historian trying to recover an elusive past," Silverman recalls. "Then, as we started doing presentations in the community, people who had a connection to the events at Compton's started coming forward and sharing their memories. We're providing a platform for them to tell their own stories."

Besides St. Jaymes and Ching, other interviewees include Rev. Ed Hansen, now pastor of the West Hollywood United Methodist Church, who as a young seminary intern helped organize the Vanguard youth group. Elliot Blackstone, the San Francisco police department's liaison to the gay community from 1962-1974, offers his assessment of the tensions at Compton's. Felicia Eliazado recounts her life as a self-described "gutter girl" in the Tenderloin of the mid-1960s.

"We sold ourselves because we needed to make a living, but we also sold ourselves because we wanted to be loved," Eliazado recalls. "It was pretty dangerous, looking like a girl and still having men's parts down there. A lot of girls got killed for being men."

Aleshia Brevard, author of *The Woman I Was Not Born to Be*, paints a lively picture of police corruption in the Tenderloin during the years leading up to the riot, when she lived there and worked as a female impersonator at the world-famous Finocchio's nightclub. Suzan Cooke tells of working as a peer counselor at the National Transsexual Counseling Unit, the first transgender social services organization, which emerged in the aftermath of the riot at Compton's.

"Screaming Queens" has garnered financial support from a surprising range of sources. A post-doctoral fellowship from the Social Science Research Council allowed Stryker to conduct historical background research, and a grant from the California Council for the Humanities allowed the two filmmakers to develop their script. The Frameline Completion Fund, Pomona College Faculty Research Grants, Horizons Foundation, and other groups and individuals have supported the filming and editing. So far, the film has cost about $75,000, but before it can go into distribution there are still financial hurdles to clear.

"People are always asking when our film is going to be finished," says Stryker, "and I've been telling them recently that it will be finished in about $25,000. We still need to finish editing, and we have to clean up some of the audio. We've gotten to the point in the fundraising process where we need to attract the support and interest of individual members of the transgender community who can help us get this story out to the broader public."

For about $25,000, a rough cut of the film can be ready for film festivals in the fall of 2004, Stryker and Silverman say, which could lead to a distribution agreement that would let them further clean up the film for a theatrical release. The filmmakers also aim to air the film on PBS, and then to release a DVD version that could be used for educational purposes.

Benefit screenings to help cover completion costs are now being planned at various locations—so check local listings for a showing near you!

Want to support the film?

Checks or credit card pledges may be sent directly to the film's fiscal sponsor:

GLBT Historical Society
657 Mission Street #300
San Francisco, CA 94105
415/777-5455
lea@glbthistory.org

IMPORTANT: Please note in the memo line that your contribution is for "Screaming Queens." For more information, please contact the filmmakers directly at: screamingqueens@comcast.com.

Roberta

by Alex Joseph

My mother had a friend, Roberta, who dressed up as an orange to film a commercial one summer. She was big and fat and round and, naturally, orange, and her dimpled rind glistened under the bright studio lights. With her huge round eyelids caked in makeup, she sang in a pretty but unexceptional voice: Juicy-juice-o, can't say no to Juicy-juice-o, can't say nooo... Every time she rehearsed, I got thirsty.

Roberta had a boyfriend named Bruce, a house with a sliding door, a wooden deck, and a volleyball net in the back yard. My mother took a Polaroid of her, bent over and weak with laughter, the volleyball stuck under her white oxford like a pregnancy. She invited my family to a party on the Fourth of July, and my sister Margaret and I got to play horseshoes and dip our fingers in the citronella candles and run barefoot inside the house. There was a buffet table laid with pigs-in-a-blanket and devilled eggs splattered with paprika. We tore paper plates out of a package and loaded them up with grand food pyramids. When it got dark, Roberta and her friends lit fireworks, something my father would never do because he said it was too dangerous.

My sister and I thought Roberta should marry Bruce.

"Marry Bruce?" she said to us, a cigarette waggling in her well-lipsticked mouth. "BRUCE? Oh, I don't think so."

She was driving us out to the Thieves' Market on Route One, where, for a quarter, a fortuneteller in a glass booth would light up and turn back and forth, and dispense a fortune wrapped up in a rubber band.

"Why not?" we said at once.

"Oh, I've got better things to do with my time."

We thought this was mean of her—better things than Bruce? Really! Bruce, with his suede tan vests and his jeans with the psychedelic patches sewn over the back pockets! Bruce, who played guitar and sang in a sweetly melancholy, if adenoidal voice, like James Taylor! Bruce's spaghetti, we said, and Bruce's cool red car, and Bruce's Maryland Tech T-shirts—Maryland Tech, where he studied computer science! (We said this to remind her Bruce might get rich one day.)

"Yeah," Roberta said, "Bruce, who puts cracks in my nicest china. Bruce, who never reads a book, unless it's got statistics in it. Bruce, who only watches sports on TV. No, I don't think so. I definitely don't think so."

Margaret said, "Oh, c'mon. You must like him a little."

Roberta glanced at Margaret, who was in the passenger's seat. "Well, he does serve one important function, of course." She gave Margaret a wink that was slower and craftier than the one she usually gave me. "But no." She faced the road again. "No wedding bells. Not for this chick."

I was disappointed Roberta wasn't about to get married. I had an elaborate fantasy where I went to her wedding, stood on a wooden dais, and gave a speech about her into a microphone.

But it was not to be. Instead, she came to my birthday party and made the Duncan Hines Deluxe cake I'd said I wanted—pink, with white frosting and chocolate chips. She brought it out of the kitchen with a sparkler stuck in the center. ("More fireworks," my father muttered.)

My mother said, "I don't understand why he wants a boxed cake. I'd be just as happy to get him one from the Sugar Cloud Bakery."

"So he likes pink cake! So what!" Roberta shouted. "Pink's got more vitamins!"

Albert Brenton, who lived across the street, was the only other person my age at the party. He said almost nothing the

whole time, until the cake was cut. When a pink pile lay on his plate, he said, "Well, that's different," and gave a dolorous little shrug.

The Brentons were our neighbors. They were Presbyterians. We were nothing. Several times, I went with them to church. The Brentons stood in gleaming, carved wooden pews and prayed and sang without irony. I was impressed with their performance, though I was happy to have avoided the same fate. Still, one Sunday at breakfast I wanted to know: "Why aren't we religious?"

My mother tightened her housecoat around herself. "What?" She often pretended not to hear something in order to stall for time.

"Why don't we go to church?"

My father set a steaming waffle in front of my mother. "You're not Christian," he said to me. "You're Jewish."

"So why don't we go to synagogue?"

My mother spread margarine on her waffle. "Well, we have better things to do," she said finally. "But you can go if you want to. Do you want to?"

The synagogue was behind the high school, almost two miles away. "How will I get there?"

"Walk."

"Walk?"

I never went.

Later that afternoon, Mrs. Brenton came over to help my mother set up for her meeting. (She chaired a local chapter of NOW.) Mostly, Mrs. Brenton just leaned in the kitchen doorway or followed my mother around like a parade float, talking in her high-pitched voice. "...so I let him know that he wasn't going to get away with it, not this time, no sir! And I told him." When I was babbling about Roberta's commercial, she said to me, "Do you remember our Little Theater production of "The Music Man" last year? Did you know we were invited down to Hilton Head, to do a performance there? But we couldn't do it. Not enough money. Isn't that sad?"

During the meeting, Mrs. Brenton just stood on the margins, sipping pink lemonade and nibbling the homemade sugar cookies she'd brought. Afterward, I noticed her talking to some of the other women in a scattered, imploring way, as if she was struggling to get her point across. Several times, I heard her say, "Well, what do I know?"

Roberta didn't come to NOW meetings. She was too busy going out to dinner with agents and TV producers. She took voice lessons and practiced her piano and her dancing. When she cooked, it was always things off the sides of boxes: Rice-n-Go. Noodle-n-Go. On her coffee table, she kept a like-new copy of *An Actor Prepares* by Stanislavski, with a bookmark that always stayed in the same place. My mother read whatever novel won the National Book Award, and Mrs. Brenton sometimes did, too, though she usually said she wished the stories were more uplifting. All three of them read those great levelers of women's taste, fashion magazines.

My parents thought it would be good for me to go to camp and socialize with boys, because at home I mostly tended to play with girls.

That was my first summer at Donnemakka, an overnight camp with horses in Maryland. Margaret had been there twice already. The legend was the actor Sylvester Stallone had been to Donnemakka, and every summer a rumor spread that the movie star was coming to visit. This was supposed to be exciting to me, and somehow, it wasn't. In any event, at the last minute Mr. Stallone always canceled.

My parents thought it would be good for me to go to camp and socialize with boys, because at home I mostly tended to play with girls. There was one, Audrey, who my mother thought bossed me around far too much. Truly, I was her supplicant. Although she was two years younger, I agreed to bring her Hawaiian punch and chocolate snack cakes on a tray. Sometimes I wore an apron like a waitress in a restaurant and minced about in the back yard, wiggling my backside while she lay on the chaise, wearing a pink bikini and dark sunglasses.

On the day they dropped me off at Donnemakka, I cried all afternoon. My mother cried too, even harder if possible. I half-heartedly hoped that if I cried enough, they would give up and take me home. But instead, when the time came, my father placed his arm firmly across my mother's shoulders and drew her away. "He's got Margaret to protect him," he told her.

As I sat alone on a log beside the cabin, still sniffling, the cabin's screen door opened and my counselor, Gus, leaned his shirtless torso out. Gus was probably 21. I still remember his lean, finely-muscled and evenly-tanned physique, the tiny whorl of chest hair at the very center of an otherwise smooth chest, and the way his hips narrowed as they sank into his shorts. Late-afternoon sun rays limned him from behind. "Hey there," he called, in his rugged and insouciant voice. "Comin' swimmin'?"

I didn't write my mother once in two weeks. She had put three pre-stamped-and-addressed postcards in my trunk, but I hid them under my socks and never gave them a second glance. She wrote me, though, in a tone that went from consoling—"I am thinking of you all the time"—to plaintive—"I hope you haven't forgotten me up there!"

For two weeks, my sister blew me off. When I wasn't completely mesmerized by my fantasy life with Gus, I pined for her. She took every opportunity to thrust me away, tell me to "grow up" in front of the other kids, and mimic the faggy way I stood. The other boys also avoided me. Whether this was because I didn't interest them or because they believed my girly behavior might be catching, I couldn't tell.

Whenever I was most bitterly alone, I thought about Roberta. Roberta and her breezy, unfettered life. Roberta in Bruce's little red Japanese car, her frizzy brown hair flying out behind her. Roberta reflected off a diner's greasy chrome walls as she ate a chicken salad sandwich. Roberta flinging back her head and letting out a sharp laugh. I dreamed she burst into our campsite wearing the orange costume and wielding an axe, campers' heads rolling to the ground like cabbages.

After two weeks, I returned from Donnemakka with a complete corner of my mind cleared for Gus. I had committed every inch of him to memory, from his gray-green eyes to the velvet-covered-marble texture of his skin. I could shoot a rifle, ride a horse, pilot a small sailboat, and I had even learned the phrase "hock a loogey."

My sister had changed, too. She walked around the house, eyeing everything with her arms folded, her face a mask of contempt. One night, when my mother brought a platter into the dining room, my sister snorted with laughter. "What're those?"

"Artichokes."

"ARTichokes." She snorted again. "God. They look like baboon hearts."

My father said, "Shut up, Margaret."

"Well, I'm not eating that. You must be out of your mind."

You didn't say things like that about my mother's cooking. "I don't give a damn whether you eat it or not. You can just get the hell up to your room, as far as I'm concerned."

My sister's face puckered as she pushed in her chair. "I can't wait to get out of this hellhole. God."

My father said, "Feeling's mutual, kiddo."

"And just what are YOU smirking at?" my mother snarled to me, because I had betrayed her, too.

Later that night, Roberta and Bruce came over to watch the premiere of the orange juice commercial. They brought a box of mini powdered doughnuts, and in the hour leading up to the commercial Roberta ate six, methodically, licking her fingers and then wiping them on the sides of her brown corduroys. When the commercial started, she shrieked and shielded her eyes. "Oh, God, I can't look, I can't look. Oh, look at me, I look terrible. I look like a total butterball. I look like a glockenspiel, I look like a marionette, I look like a total freak of nature!"

When it was over, Roberta flung back her head and laughed, the sound soaring over the room. "Well," she said, when the laugh was all squeezed out, "that's the end of my citrus fruit career. Talk about miscasting! Clearly, I wasn't cut out to play produce. Keep me behind the deli counter, that's where I belong. I'll play a bratwurst, I'll play a turkey loaf. I'll play a tub of coleslaw!"

"You'd make a good broccoli," Bruce volunteered.

Roberta sang, "It's not easy, being green."

This was how the two of them talked all the time.

The next Saturday, for Albert Brenton's birthday, I wrapped up a gyroscope from the toy shop at the Air and Space Museum. Mrs. Brenton had announced that she was throwing a simultaneous soiree for the adults.

My mother was getting ready. This activity required as much care and precision as a military operation. I observed it many times from the lounge beside her bed. She had to curl her hair into a spunky, blond flip, massage in the proper amount of foundation, blush, and rouge, touch up her lips, and all the small, bristly black hairs that grew in along her jawline had to be assiduously tweezed. When she went with just my father to Wolf Trap for concerts on the lawn, she wore a white linen dress with a beaded leather belt and suede and fringed tan boots—an outfit she'd cribbed from a display. For this party, though, neighborhood people would be there, so she needed to seem more commanding. She chose a dark blue denim pinafore, tied a red scarf around her neck, and topped it off with an inviolable black beret.

Later that night, Roberta and Bruce came over to watch the premiere of the orange juice commercial. They brought a box of mini powdered doughnuts...

From behind her bedroom door, Margaret called that she was staying home.

We knew to follow the trail of yellow balloons strung along the Brentons' white wooden fence, down the driveway and into the back yard, where a paper tablecloth draped over a picnic table fluttered in the breeze. A line of Japanese paper lanterns was strung over the clothesline. Six or so adults stood on the side of the small hill, pecking with forks at the thick plastic plates tucked under their thumbs, and munching. They looked up, embarrassed, whenever anyone new entered the yard. Mrs. Brenton laid out burgers and iceberg lettuce and beefsteak tomatoes on stainless steel platters and set up stereo speakers in the living room windows to pipe guitar and flute music into the back yard. Flames from bug-repellent candles wobbled in glass candleholders.

Albert came up to me, his cheeks shiny and pimpled with errant kernels. The rest of the boys were up in his treehouse behind the garage. "You have to see the new BB gun my parents gave me."

Guns. My father wouldn't let us bring guns into the house, not even squirt guns. My mind raced at the memory of shooting the .22s at Donnemakka.

"Let's go," I said, practically choking with desire.

The Brentons' house had a distinctive smell, which somehow reminded me of their church. Mrs. Brenton set out potpourri in silver bowls and waxed the floor herself, whereas my mother let her floors get by with the rather desultory job done on them by our housekeeper. Mrs. Brenton decorated with dark Federal pieces, baby's breath in tin vases, and 19th-century wind instruments no one was supposed to play. We raced through the foyer and up the creaky wooden stairs.

In his bedroom, Albert stretched out on his bed. I asked where the gun was, and he pointed to a box on his dresser. My pulse went slack. "You have to put it together?"

"Yeah, Dad's doing it after dinner."

"Wow, great." What did he think—I was going to get excited about something in a box?

We had lain beneath his nubby brown bedspread for many hours, giggling until one of his parents came in and shouted at us to shut up and get to sleep. But now that was mostly over, because I was beginning to find Albert annoying. He always laughed at stupid jokes about crap and peepees, and the only time he read a book was for school. Without the gun, there was nothing up there for me to look at. I had seen the WWII bomber wallpaper, his elaborate yellow gerbil maze, and his (book-free) bookshelf.

Albert saw that I was irritated. "You wanna go see my mom's new bathroom?" Mrs. Brenton had gotten a new bathroom because my mother had.

"Sure," I shrugged.

Mrs. Brenton had installed salmon-colored tiles and a matching bidet (also something my mother had first) and a clear glass shower door. The glass on my parents' door was pebbled. "Now your father can see your mother naked while he's brushing his teeth."

Albert made a face. "Ewww," he said. "Mommy naked."

"Well, it's true," I said. "Face it. Under

her clothes, your mom's naked, just like you are. You're both naked."

Albert giggled shyly, almost coquettishly.

From beside the sink, I snatched up a lipstick in a mother-of-pearl case. "Here, I'll show you what it looks like." He let me dab a fuchsia, bow-shaped pucker over his lips, and when it was done, he smiled so coyly that it seemed to be what he'd wanted all along. Emboldened, I maneuvered him backward into the shower and shut the door.

"See?" I said, when I'd installed him. "I see you, you see me."

What did I think I was doing? I think I thought I was acting like Roberta.

Albert pressed his lips up to the glass door, leaving a smooch mark.

"You'd make a good girl," I told him.

He was studying the lipstick smear from close up.

"Albert, c'mon," I said. He allowed himself to be led to his mother's closet, which, unlike my mother's, was color-coordinated. I saw something green, wool—"This'll go with your hair"—and tugged it off the hanger.

He was shockingly passive while I outfitted him. All my training from watching my mother had paid off. I knew how to adjust the simple dress on his shoulders, and I taped the hem up with some double-sided tape. I rubbed foundation on his face, dusted his cheeks with rouge, and gave his eyelids a green hue to match the outfit. All the while, he had the patient, docile look of a cow being milked.

As a girl, Albert was not half bad. He would not really pass—the outline of his face was unmistakably a boy's, as was his squint. Yet his pouty lips, long lashes, and dainty nose were certainly working. "Albert," I announced breathlessly, "you're absolutely BEAUTIFUL."

Albert batted his eyes. "Am I?"

"All the other girls are going to be so jealous of you."

He looked at himself in the mirror. "I'm a beautiful girl," he said, experimentally, and kneaded the unfilled breast cups of the dress. I went and got him two pair of balled-up athletic socks. While we were stuffing him, we heard the needle lifted off the record of guitar and flute music, and then Mrs. Brenton called up the stairs.

"I'm a beautiful girl," he said, experimentally, and kneaded the unfilled breast cups of the dress.

Albert was stepping into a pair of faux-alligator pumps, holding my shoulder for balance and giggling. "Yes?"

"Come here, we've got something for you."

They were gathered around the bottom of the stairs, everyone who had come to the party—a few neighbors, some of the Brenton's other friends, and a whole posse of neighborhood kids. In the center stood Mrs. Brenton, holding a chocolate cake glowing with candles. They began to sing "Happy Birthday" when they heard us open the door, and they kept singing until Albert limped and hobbled around the stair landing. Then the singing faltered and dwindled, until at last it was nothing at all.

I was lying in bed, wondering what went wrong, when someone knocked on my screen. Since both our windows looked over the sun porch, my sister sometimes climbed out and knocked on my screen to scare me. This time, I just ignored her. I didn't even roll over to look.

What, exactly, had happened when I led Albert down the stairs? At first, no one said anything. Albert was smiling obliviously. He tottered to the bottom of the steps and blew out the cake with a few short, prissy puffs. Then Mrs. Brenton said something. Afterward, many people said many different things. But really, in my memory, the only remark I completely recall is Mrs. Brenton's, which came to stand for them all: "Why did you do that to him?"

The knock came at my window again, and when I turned over I saw it wasn't Margaret, but Roberta. She had somehow managed to climb the drainpipe. "Hey! Psst! You in there!" I slid up the screen and she swung her heavy legs over the windowsill. She was wearing some kind of gauzy pink top and a pair of tight-fitting blue jeans. "Me acting like Jack and the Beanstalk is like a limousine trying out for NASCAR," she panted. "C'mon, let's go for a ride. I'm in the mood."

We crept out the back door, me still in my pajamas, and Roberta drove us to the Uptown Diner. It was where I had always pictured her, except she didn't order a chicken salad sandwich. She got a plate of fried shrimp and a chocolate milkshake instead. When she was done, she said she felt guilty. "An actress should always watch her figure." So she ordered a garden salad with lemon wedges instead of dressing, but when it arrived, she didn't eat it. She picked up random lettuce leaves with her fingernails, looked at them on both sides, and returned them to the bowl.

I told Roberta about the party, and Albert, and what we'd done, and she said, "Well, maybe you're just going to be a different kind of kid. There's nothing wrong with being different." She thought about that for a second. "Although it can get lonely sometimes."

But no, that wasn't the point, I told Roberta. The point was, Albert wanted to get made up that way. Not me. Everyone was acting like it said something about ME.

Roberta wasn't listening. What she said was, "You know what the difference

is between men and women? It's that men think sex is easy, and women think it's hard."

I had no idea what she meant. "Who's right?"

Roberta let another lettuce leaf flutter back into the bowl. "Depends," she said, swiveling in her seat to face me, "whether you're a man. Or a woman."

It took my mother three-and-a-half years to die, and she never complained about it. At the time, I didn't question the idea that she simply didn't mind, but now I believe she behaved this way because she thought it was gallant.

Only once did I hear her say, "You know what cancer is like? Getting stuffed backward into a small, dark sack."

By the time she was diagnosed, my mother hadn't spoken to Roberta for more than 15 years. Something mysterious, in fact, had happened to almost all of my mother's female friendships. The ones I thought were genuine, the friendships with the politically active women, had ended. She got mad at some; others she ignored until they left her alone.

I had always thought my mother's friendship with Mrs. Brenton was like an arranged marriage, but evidently, like many arranged marriages, this one had given rise to actual sentiment. Toward the end of my mother's life, the two became best friends. During the days, while their husbands were at work, they went out shopping when my mother was well, or watched TV or did cross-stitch when she wasn't. They talked about the Democratic Party, and sometimes they gossiped about me, the "famous" costume designer (I work on one of the highest-rated daytime series), and my sister, who does bankruptcy law in Maryland. My mother probably wanted my sister and me to pair off like Albert, who married a girl he met at Alabama State, but my sister is terminally single, and I date men. Actually, I'm dating quite a few of them, and I use the word "dating" only in the loosest way.

But the saddest part about my mother's dying was how she started talking about God. The woman who once said she didn't have time for religion now routinely said, "Well, God meant that to happen," or worse, "God loves you." The best I could think to reply was, "Think so, huh?"

When my mother's obituary ran in *The Washington Post*, Roberta saw it and

wrote a letter to my father, who forwarded it to my sister. One day, I got an e-mail: "I hope you don't mind it but your sister said I could write you. I wanted you to know how much I loved your mother. She was really a super-duper lady and she had two beautiful children."

Roberta let another lettuce leaf flutter back into the bowl. "Depends," she said, swiveling in her seat to face me, "whether you're a man. Or a woman."

I wrote Roberta a long response, but I didn't mention my mother. I wrote about the Fourth of July party and the pink cake and the time she'd climbed on the roof and we'd gone to the diner, and, best of all, the time she'd done the juice commercial.

She didn't reply for a while.

"Commercial? You must mean that public service announcement we did about the four food groups for 4-H. It was just regional cable, you know. I guess you'll do anything for money, if you have to."

I couldn't read Roberta's tone. Was it hurt? Humiliated, even?

It had taken a long time, but my sister and I had finally stopped being angry with each other. We had come to a kind of draw—not a peace, but close—over the ways we had let each other down when we were growing up. Now I found Margaret funny and comforting, and I even confided in her occasionally. I forwarded her a copy of the e-mail I'd sent Roberta. Had I written something offensive?

"Roberta wasn't like that. You just made all that up. Climbing on the roof? I don't think so, little bro. What have you been smoking? Besides, Roberta's not funny now. She's really not funny. She didn't get Bruce, or babies, or anything. She lives out in Delaware somewhere. I think Mom said she was on Celexa or something, but that was a while ago now."

I made Margaret give me the address off Roberta's letter, and then I did something completely in contrast to my reputation as an exacting perfectionist: I let my assistant take over the show the next day, and rented a car.

Roberta's place was part of a small, burnt-red brick subdivision skulking over the highway, surrounded by mud and weeds. It was the kind of place a sociologist might write a book about and call it "The Ugliest Place in the World." I climbed a set of rusty metal stairs to the second floor and rang Roberta's bell.

The woman who came to the door was Roberta in outline only. The rest of her had become shrunken, caved-in. Her face was shiny and her hair was thinning, and the backs of her hands were covered with red scabs.

She knew instantly who I was—they sometimes run my picture in the magazines. But instead of seeming delighted, she seemed distressed.

"Oh, you shouldn't see me like this," she said. Her hands fluttered down the opening of her yellow nightgown. "I'm

really—I'm not decent." But she backed up into her foyer, and not knowing what else to do, I followed her into the dim entryway. A large, blaring TV dominated the living room. Roberta seemed a little dizzy, and she motioned me toward a pink sofa, throwing aside a dusty gray comforter. On the windowsill behind the couch stood an army of unsmiling white porcelain dolls. The place smelled of cough syrup. Roberta collapsed into the recliner opposite. "Well," she said,"this is such a surprise. Too bad I've got this cold." She pulled out a tissue and blew into it several times before dropping it on top of an already formidable pile on the coffee table.

I showed her my tackle box full of makeup. "Hey," I said. "I'm a famous stylist, remember? Wanna makeover?"

She gave a tiny, frantic, warding-off gesture. "Ohhh, not really. Thank you, though." She slid a pill into her mouth—I could see she was trying to be surreptitious about it—and sucked something carbonated through a pink straw.

I was embarrassed. Why had I assumed she might want something like a makeover? Maybe all she wanted was to be left alone.

"No, stay. Stay," she said, when she saw me eyeing the door. "Mostly I just watch TV now." She pointed at her big set. "I've seen your show a few times. Sometimes I can't completely follow the plots."

"Nobody can," I said. I gave a self-deprecating laugh, but Roberta didn't see the joke.

"Do you want some ginger ale?" she asked. "I also have mango-orange fruit juice."

"That's all right," I said. "But what if we went for a drive? I saw a nice-looking diner on the way."

"I don't think so," she said, running a scabby hand over her scalp. "I get cold easy. I get nauseated easy. I'd rather just stay here. 'Crime and Trial' will be on soon. I never miss that."

Both of us were silent then. The TV talked and showed us pictures of expensive new trucks streaking along mountain roads. What could I do for Roberta? There had to be something. I thought about how I'd felt when I first met her, and then how I felt when I saw her acting on TV.

I asked where the bathroom was. Her clothes closet was beside the bedroom. Of course, I half-hoped the orange costume would be there, dusty, but still in one piece. No such luck. I did find a nice dirndl—more burnt sienna than straight orange—which just fit over my bulky frame. I raided her bathroom for cosmetics and found plenty, most of which looked as though they hadn't been used for years.

I showed her my tackle box full of makeup. "Hey," I said. "I'm a famous stylist, remember? Wanna makeover?"

It seems ridiculous to say, but it grieved me to be so starkly unbeautiful. As a man, I was almost adequate—mushy maybe, but not without certain strengths and appeal. But as a woman, I was hopeless. Dressed, I felt squarish, irritatingly nonfeminine. The dirndl bit into me all around my chest, which was oversized from too many bench presses. I left my hairy legs bare, but I did squeeze into a pair of low heels. Compared to me, Albert Brenton had been a dazzling beauty queen.

When Roberta realized what was clomping toward her out of the bedroom, she cried, "Holy shit," and gripped the sides of her chair like someone on a thrill ride. In the middle of the living room, I stood with my palm in the center of my chest, threw my head back, and sang:

Juicy-juice-o, can't say no to
Juicy-juice-o, can't say nooo

How Roberta laughed then. Oh, my God. It was the best thing I'd heard in so long, that near hysteria soaring over the room—the best thing since my mother's diagnosis. Roberta made me do the jingle again, and then a third time. She shut off the television and shouted, "C'mon, c'mon, once more!" and roared all over again each time. It turned out Roberta did have other things to drink besides ginger ale and fruit juice. She poured us glasses of the stuff over ice, and then she turned off the lights, and we drank and told stories about my mother and drank some more. As we talked, we stared out the window at the night and the stars, until we seemed to be hurtling toward them.

Alex Joseph *is a writer based in New Yark, where he warks as a jaurnalist. He has published in numeraus jaurnals and little magazines. He is writing a navel, tentatively titled* They Ga Up.

Yvonne Cook-Riley, learning to lobby, Washington, DC, 1995

Exploring the Gender Frontier

Review by David Steinberg, Photos by Mariette Pathy Allen

The Gender Frontier. *Photographs and text by Mariette Pathy Allen, with essays by Grady Turner, Riki Wilchins, Jamison Green, and Milton Diamond. In English and German.* Kehrer Verlag, Heidelberg. 2003, *168 pages, ISBN 3-936636-04-4, $36.*

Mariette Pathy Allen has been photographing gender outlaws since 1978, when she befriended a group of crossdressers who happened to be staying in her hotel. Her first book, *Transformations: Crossdressers and Those Who Love Them,* is a thoughtful, stereotype-busting collection of portraits that offers rare insight into the reality of who crossdressers really are, what motivates them to lead their lives as they do, and how those decisions affect their most intimate relationships with others.

Allen's new book, *The Gender Frontier,* extends that perspective and insight from crossdressers to transsexuals— the wider, rapidly-growing community of people who are increasingly asserting their right and desire to define gender for themselves—and who, as a result, profoundly call into question the traditional notion that gender is a polar issue—male or female—defined at birth by the shape and nature of a person's genitals.

What distinguishes Allen's photography from so many other images of people who fall outside conventional notions of male-female polarity is the depth of her understanding of, and identification with, the people she is photographing. For 25 years, Allen has immersed herself in the transgender world—attending transgender conventions and gatherings, participating in protests and lobbying efforts around transgender issues—developing close friendships with dozens of transgendered individuals along the way. Wherever Allen has gone, her camera has gone with her—recording, documenting, probing everything from mass public action to intimate personal involvements. Over time, she has come to be trusted and welcomed by the transgender community as a true friend and fellow traveler—someone who is not only sympathetic to the issues of transgender equality, but who also understands that the issues raised by transgendered people are important for non-transgendered people too. As a result of that trust, Allen is able to photograph her friends and subjects at a level of intimacy and honesty not available to someone who comes to transgender issues as an outsider.

Because she refuses to see her transgendered subjects as people fundamentally different from herself, Allen's photographs challenge the reflexive urge of non-transgendered people to draw cut-and-dried lines between Us and Them, Self and Other. Because she sees breaking down rigid notions of gender as an important personal and political dynamic for everyone, Allen's photography pushes non-transgendered people to see that the people who define their gender in unconventional ways are fundamentally people very much like the rest of us, rather than people who are somehow alien souls.

Overcoming a sense of separation between people living outside social acceptability and people who stay within the boundaries of social norms and privilege is no small feat when the subject in question is gender variation. Traditional notions of gender powerfully color how we order, classify, and make sense out of ourselves and the world around us. It's hardly surprising that most of us therefore hold on to our notions of gender order and classification tightly, rigidly, and that we easily diminish individuals who fall outside the realm of gender respectability from people to phenomena, from first-class citizens to freaks, from members of the human family to strange visitors from some great beyond.

We may treat these outsiders with deference rather than hostility, with curiosity rather than disdain, but most of us tend to see people who we can't easily classify as men or women as outsiders nevertheless.

Perhaps the most remarkable quality of the photos in *The Gender Frontier* is that they work so effectively to kick us out of these divisive, dismissive habits. Allen's ability to relate to her subjects as true friends, intimates, and fellow travelers on the road of life is transmitted by her photographs to viewers who may be far less familiar with this growing community of gender pioneers. Her camera consistently incorporates the respect with which Allen sees her subjects, her appreciation of their fundamental humanity, and her identification with their particular struggle to overcome widespread fear and misunderstanding. Her photographs offer her inclusive, affectionate vision to us—inviting us to come inside the illuminating, and in many ways transformative, possibilities that are created when we leave traditional notions of gender and gender immutability behind.

When we look at the photos in *The Gender Frontier,* we are vividly aware that the people in these images do not con-

form to the fixed notions of man and woman, male and female, that are the staples of our daily diet of gender confirmation and reassurance. As we turn the pages, we are gradually but powerfully inundated with images—sometimes striking, sometimes quite mundane—of people we cannot easily identify, classify, sort, and file into the well-worn categories of our severely limited gender vocabulary. And yet, on another level, we cannot help but notice that these uncategorizable photographic subjects are simply people pursuing the same joys, suffering many of the same frustrations, asking for the same basic satisfactions from their lives as everyone else.

Cas, a female-to-male transsexual who has had to endure the refusal of most of his family to accept his transsexuality, plays affectionately with his infant grandchild while his daughter smiles her appreciation and love. Marla, a painter, sculptor, and writer who used to be an undercover narcotics agent named Mike, paints with her perhaps-10-year-old daughter, both of their attentions riveted to the canvas. Maxwell and Corissa, both transgendered, share an affectionate kiss in a suds-filled bathtub.

Each photo is a testament to the possibility of experiencing life's most basic joys, even if one dares to violate some of society's most basic expectations and dictates. Each photo affirms the universality of certain human experiences, no matter how atypical a person's sense of self may be.

Other photos in *The Gender Frontier* document experiences, struggles, and issues that are specific to the transgender community—often issues of fighting against injustice and inequality. Robert Eads says farewell to hundreds of fellow transsexuals two months before dying of ovarian cancer that twenty doctors and three hospitals refused to treat because Robert did not fit into their notions of male and female. A transgendered woman dissolves into tears while speaking at the memorial for her friend, Amanda Milan, a male-to-female transsexual viciously murdered in New York while a line of cab drivers watched and cheered. A series of photos follow Tonye's transition to Tony, the shift from female to male, including vivid images of both Tonye's double mastectomy and Tony's phalloplasty (penis construction).

"Brandon Teeno should have been here", Gay Pride Parade, New York, 1995

People whose natures call up other people's fears and biases have to deal with issues that more conventionally-oriented individuals are privileged to ignore. But the issues that each transgendered person must face in deciding to honor their internal sense of gender are issues that other people must deal with as well, albeit in substantially less wrenching ways. How much do any of us give up aspects of who we are in order to accommodate the expectations and comfort needs of the people around us? How much do we limit our sense of self and of life to avoid potential hostility, condemnation, or even disapproval of our friends and family? How much do we insist, explicitly or implicitly, that the people around us fulfill our detailed expectations of them, lest they force us to examine uncomfortable issues and feelings within ourselves?

These are the sorts of questions that Mariette Pathy Allen raises with *The Gender Frontier*. One section of the book, devoted to political activism around transgender issues, documents the growing movements to extend equal rights to transgendered people, and to protest the extreme violence that transgendered people so often encounter. The other three sections of the book—dealing with youth, portraits, and more extensive narratives of selected individuals—focus on more personal expositions of what it means to live one's life outside traditional gender definitions.

There was a slogan during the political activism of the 1960s and 70s, affirming that "the personal is political"—that all the details of how people lead their personal lives have political content and political consequence. Nowhere is this more true than around questions of sex and gender, where what should properly be the most individual and personal of choices often subjects individuals to fierce social and political punishment,

> The closet is neither plush
> nor womblike
> It is caustic
> Lined with sandpaper
> And you will erode yourself
> And you will disappear.
> — Colleen Mullins,
> in *The Gender Frontier*

Chloe, Kim, and Eva, at the Village Piers, New York, 1997.

Hollis and Alex, students from Florida, at GenderPAC conference, Washington, DC, 2002.

ranging anywhere from social disapproval to active discrimination to arrest to physical violence.

Mariette Pathy Allen has long been campaigning with her camera for understanding, acceptance, and personal growth around the questions of gender, gender diffusion, and gender fluidity. *The Gender Frontier* presents a sampling of her voluminous work on these issues in book form for the first time. It is a look into the heart of the gender matrix well worth experiencing.

If you'd like to receive the column "Comes Naturally" and other writing by ***David Steinberg*** *regularly via email (free and confidential), send your name and email address to David at eranat@aol.com. Post columns are available at the Society for Human Sexuality's "David Steinberg Archives": www.sexuality.org/davids.html.*

*Three books edited by David—*Erotic by Nature: A Celebration of Life, of Love, and of Our Wonderful Bodies, The Erotic Impulse: Honoring the Sensual Self, *and the just-released photo anthology,* Photo Sex: Fine Art Sexual Photography Comes of Age*—are available from him by mail order. Descriptions and ordering information are posted at: www.sexuality.org/l/davids/en.html, www.sexuality.org/l/davids/ei.html, and www.sexuality.org/l/davids/ps.html.*

Dress Codes

Review by Spencer Bergstedt

Dress Codes: Of Three Girlhoods—My Mother's, My Father's, and Mine. *(2002). Noelle Howey,* Picador USA/St. Martin's Press, *332 pages, $24.*

One of the most amazing things about Noelle Howey's *Dress Codes* is that it does what few of the myriad memoir-type books about trans people manage to do—it creates connections with its readers by acknowledging that all people, trans or not, have experiences in our lives which cause us to be closeted, to feel different from others, to think we are unique in that experience, and to at some point transition into something more real.

Noelle Howey writes of her father's gender transition from male to female, as well as the transitions of her mother, her two grandmothers, and herself. She creates a vivid picture of how all five of these women in her family made early life choices based on their childhood experiences and how each gained a greater sense of self and self-fulfillment by transitioning later in life, in one way or another.

The book weaves together the stories of Howey's mother, her father, and herself. Howey describes how her mother started out as an insecure young bride married to a man she knew was interested in crossdressing, but committed to making the marriage last. She tells how her father was a distant, silent man, unable to show affection. She describes her own adolescent and early adult confrontations with self-destructive behavior. Ultimately, she describes a mother who moves on with her life, a father who comes to fulfill herself as the woman she knows herself to be, and a young woman becoming a self-actualized adult.

Howey manages to tackle the cultural implications of dressing up in a pragmatic and often humorous way: "Being a transsexual isn't just about clothes, any more than being a woman is," she writes. "However, that doesn't mean clothes are meaningless.... [They] are a representation of identity—for men, women, everyone in between."

Howey's is a witty, insightful style which is at its best when she is describing her family history. She keeps her perspective throughout the book and steers clear of the major sins of many trans memoirs—she's not playing to the freak-of-the-week shocker formula, she's not making anyone the "former pariah now a saint," and she's not creating an overly flattering picture of herself or her parents.

All in all, *Dress Codes* is an excellent read for those wanting to put a real, human face on transsexuality. In the end, we all have our demons to conquer in becoming our true selves.

Eunuch Monks of Krat

Review by Sam More

The Insatiable Adventures of the Eunuch Monks of Krat. (2002). Tucker Lieberman, XLibris, *$14.95.*

Do we have to have good sex? Is a violation of privacy really bad, or might it be interpreted as a sign of affection rather than an intrusion? How do we identify with a non-standard body morphology, and how does passing as our preferred gender affect our happiness? There are countless sociological texts and self-help books about these matters, but they are too rarely addressed in fiction—so I was truly pleased when I was sent a novel which promised a transgender theme, rather than the mere inclusion of a transgendered or gender-nonconforming character.

A science fiction book based on a computer game! If I had read the editor's review on the back of the book, I might never have touched it. Instead, I happily digested it and found it not unpalatable. Imagine a bunch of eunuchs, enslaved in an imaginary country very much like India, where a blend of castes and third-world villages co-exist with lush tropical forests, computers, and a prince who holds the power of life and death over his servants, including his huge harem.

But soon these forces are reversed and a computer game-playing group of five eunuchs sets out to form a community of their own in a hut in the forest. Surprisingly, an old stuffed head of a moose comes to life and, via a device disrespectfully dubbed a catheter, enables them to connect to their inner selves and to each other in new ways. This could be boring, but it isn't: imagine the absurdity of Philip K. Dick's novels crossed with the humor of Douglas Addams' *Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy.*

There are some lags in the action in the last third, which convinced me to abandon the book at three am, but the speed of action is recovered in the last chapters, as I found out when I picked the book up some weeks later.

Other novels have recently put non-standard characters into focus, like Lord Golden in the *Tawny Man* trilogy of Robin Hobbs and *Shadow Man* by Melissa Scott, but Lieberman's eunuchs are enjoyable and should present food for thought for FTMs, MTFs and other transgendered folks.

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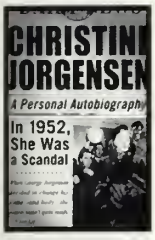

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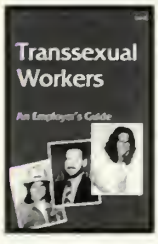

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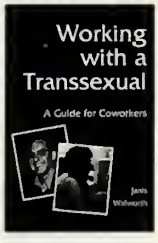

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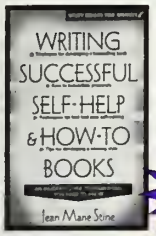

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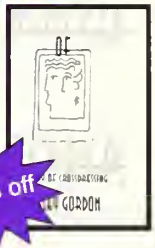

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